On Culture: Know the Enemy and Know Thyself— Giap, Abrams, and Victory

A Monograph

by

MAJ Daijiro (Don) Kanase
United States Army

School of Advanced Military Studies
United States Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

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The US Army's capstone doctrine on unified land warfare states that leaders be culturally astute. How does one become culturally astute and what is its relevance? Understanding culture, especially one's own culture, is not just a branch specific duty; it is every US Army leader's responsibility. Becoming culturally astute requires knowing oneself and one's enemy, which is not merely an analysis of military capabilities, but a deeper philosophical and cultural understanding of identity, which may influence or even drive certain behaviors.

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Name of Candidate: Major Daijiro (Don) Kanase

Monograph Title: On Culture: Know the Enemy and Know Thyself–Giap, Abrams, and
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Approved by:

_____, Monograph Director
Peter J. Schifferle, PhD

_____, Seminar Leader
Dyrald Cross, Col

_____, Director, School of Advanced Military Studies
Henry A. Arnold III, COL

Accepted this 26th day of May 2016 by:

_____, Director, Graduate Degree Programs
Robert F. Baumann, PhD

Abstract

On Culture: Know the Enemy and Know Thyself—Giap, Abrams, and Victory, by MAJ Daijiro (Don) Kanase, 71 pages.

The US Army's capstone doctrine on unified land warfare states that leaders must be culturally astute. How does a military leader become culturally astute and for what purpose? Understanding culture, especially one's own culture, is not just a branch specific duty; it is every US Army leader's responsibility. Becoming culturally astute requires knowing oneself and one's enemy, which is not merely an analysis of military capabilities, but a deeper philosophical and cultural understanding of identity, which may influence or even drive certain behaviors. Knowing oneself is not an intuitive judgment, but a deliberate analysis of one's society, military organization, and personal identity. Understanding one's cultural identity and an adversary's cultural identity enables leaders to better anticipate future action. The author conducted a case study of General Vo Nguyen Giap and General Creighton Abrams to analyze the relationships between society's cultural influences, organizational influences, personal identity, and behavior. The US Army's fundamental solution towards readiness should include a process for cultural understanding for all US Army leaders.

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Acronyms

ADP   Army Doctrine Publication

ADRP   Army Doctrine Reference Publication

FM   Field Manual

JP   Joint Publication

US   United States

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Introduction

> One who knows the enemy and knows himself will not be endangered in a hundred engagements. One who does not know the enemy but knows himself will sometimes be victorious, sometimes meet with defeat. One who knows neither the enemy nor himself will invariably be defeated in every engagement.

> —Sun-Tzu, *The Art of War*

US Army Doctrine Reference Publication 3-0 *Unified Land Operations* states, "Army leaders must remain…culturally astute."[1] The capstone doctrine on US Army unified land warfare asserts that leaders must understand culture, and emphasizes that leaders performing in multinational operations must understand cultural differences among joint, interagency, and multinational forces. The main research question is exactly how does a military leader become "culturally astute" and for what purpose? Chinese military theorist Sun-Tzu provides an approach.

Understanding culture, particularly one's own culture, is not just a branch-specific duty, but is every US Army leader's responsibility. Cultural identity affects how a leader thinks, behaves, and makes decisions. Specifically, cultural identity affects how a military leader conducts operational art. Joint Publication 3-0 *Joint Operations* defines operational art as "the cognitive approach by commanders and staffs…to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways, and means."[2] Initially understanding one's own culture exposes tacit biases that may drive specific behaviors and decisions in pursuing strategic objectives. A person's cultural identity is an embodiment of

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[1] Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 1-5.

[2] Joint Publication (JP) 3-0 *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), GL-14; ADRP 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, 4-1. *ADRP 3-0 Unified Land Operations* defines operational art as "the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose."

societal culture and organizational culture, which influences behavior. Understanding one's

cultural identity and an adversary's cultural identity enables US Army commanders and staffs to

better understand the operational environment and anticipate future action.[3]

Becoming culturally astute requires knowing oneself and one's enemy, which is not

merely an analysis of military capabilities, but a deeper philosophical and cultural understanding

of identity, which may influence or even drive certain behaviors. Knowing oneself is not an

intuitive judgment, but a deliberate analysis of one's society, military organization, and personal

identity. Sun-Tzu asserted that knowing oneself and one's enemy could result in victory.[4] Using

an inductive approach, the author analyzed salient aspects and relationships between North

Vietnamese society and the North Vietnamese Army to assess linkages with General Vo Nguyen

Giap's actions in the mid-1900s. Then, the author analyzed salient aspects and relationships

between US society and the US Army to assess linkages with General Creighton Abrams's

actions in the mid-1900s.

Whether an agent is a country, army, or person, understanding an agent's heritage,

philosophy, and values form three interrelated criteria to assess how one becomes culturally

astute.[5] The author chose the three criteria based on an assessment of patterns that emerged from

extensive research. A pattern of primary, secondary, and theoretical resources describing heritage,

philosophy, and values emerged. Heritage consists of events, traditions, and beliefs from an

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[3] Sun-Tzu, *Sun-Tzu: The Art of Warfare*, trans. Roger Ames (New York City: Ballantine Books, 1993), 103.

[4] Sun-Tzu, *The Art of War: Complete Texts and Commentaries*, trans. Thomas Cleary (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2000), 85.

[5] Laura M. Ahearn, "Language and Agency," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (October 2001): 113, accessed November 29, 2015, http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/ 10.1146/annurev.anthro.30.1.109?journalCode=anthro. Agency refers to the capacity to intentionally act. According to Ahearn, agency extends beyond an individual to any group of individuals. Throughout this monograph, the author assessed each country, army, and individual as a unique agent.

agent's history. Philosophy is the study of one's worldview on reality and the framework in which one processes information and knowledge. Values are concepts or beliefs about desired conditions or behavior that represent guiding principles and motivations. Heritage, philosophy, and values interrelate because an agent's heritage may shape a specific philosophy or a set of values. Conversely, an agent's philosophy or values may shape events that become part of an agent's heritage.[6]

Heritage forms the first criterion for analysis. The concept of a heritage is anything from the past that is still important in the present. National heritage consists of historical events, traditions, or beliefs that resonate with the society of a nation. From an organization's perspective such as an army, heritage may consist of key events such as the day a political organization established that army. An army's heritage may also include historic battles or wars that shaped an army's perspectives about future wars. A person's heritage may include the date and location of that person's birth, family records, past struggles, and accomplishments. Heritage concerns historic events, ideas, or patterns that still resonate in the present. Heritage focuses on what happened in the past while philosophy focuses on why and how one gains knowledge.[7]

Philosophy forms the second criterion for analysis. Philosophy is the study of the fundamental nature of reality, mankind, and mankind's relationship with metaphysics and the physical universe. Furthermore, a philosophy is a set of beliefs and principles that influences the interpretation of reality and guides understanding. Philosophy provides a framework on how to understand the world. A national philosophy is a framework in which a nation processes information about ideas and events that may relate to ethics, politics, metaphysics, epistemology,

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[6] Steven Hitlin and Jane A. Piliavin, "Values: Reviving a Dormant Concept" *Annual Review of Sociology* 30 (August 2004): 359-361, accessed November 30, 2015, http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.soc.30.012703.110640; Nicholas Maxwell, *Global Philosophy: What Philosophy Ought To Be* (Exeter, UK: Imprint Academic, 2014), 31, 41.

[7] "What Heritage Studies Can Do For You," The Library of Congress, accessed December 28, 2015, https://www.loc.gov/folklife/poster/introtext.html; "About Heritage," The Heritage Foundation, accessed December 28, 2015, http://www.heritage.org/about.

and esthetics.[8] Specifically, an army organization's philosophy may focus on the purpose of the army, the army's roles, and the army's relationship with the government and society. An army soldier's personal philosophy may focus on how that soldier perceives and thinks about war and warfare. Every person has a personal philosophy whether that person tacitly understands or explicitly defines it. An agent's philosophy guides thoughts, behavior, and action.[9]

Values form the third criterion for analysis. A value is an ideal conception that influences the selection of ends, ways, and means of action. Values shape the identity of a country, organization or person by influencing attitudes, motivations, and actions. A country's national values represent ideals that form through a country's heritage and philosophy. From a political perspective, national values shape national interests, which influences behavior in domestic and international affairs. From an organizational perspective, an army's organizational values form a vital aspect of identity, which influences behavior in warfare. From an individual perspective, personal values compose a vital aspect of personal identity, which frames the ends, ways, and means for action and the motivation behind the action. [10]

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[8] Ayn Rand, *Philosophy: Who Needs It?* (New York City: Penguin Group, Inc. 1982), 2. Philosopher-novelist Ayn Rand proposed that the root of philosophy is a philosophy's position on the primacy of existence versus the primacy of consciousness. Rand's definition of the primacy of existence and the primacy of consciousness are as follows: "The primacy of existence (of reality) is the axiom that existence exists, i.e., that the universe exists independent of consciousness (of any consciousness), that things are what they are, that they possess a specific nature, an identity. The epistemological corollary is the axiom that consciousness is the faculty of perceiving that which exists — and that man gains knowledge of reality by looking outward. The rejection of these axioms represents a reversal: the primacy of consciousness — the notion that the universe has no independent existence, that it is the product of a consciousness (either human or divine or both). The epistemological corollary is the notion that man gains knowledge of reality by looking inward (either at his own consciousness or at the revelations it receives from another, superior consciousness)."

[9] Harry C. Garner, "Developing an Effective Command Philosophy," *Military Review September-October 2012* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Combined Arms Command, 2012), 77.

[10] Hitlin and Piliavin, "Values," 359-361. "A value is a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable, which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action."

In the first section following the literature review of this monograph, the author analyzed North Vietnam through a cultural lens by examining its heritage, philosophy, and values. North Vietnamese national heritage consists of oscillating eras of autonomy and subjugation. Vietnam maintained independence until 111 BC when China invaded and conquered Hanoi. China ruled Vietnam for the next thousand years until 907 CE during which the Chinese heavily influenced Vietnamese society through Confucian and Taoist philosophy.[11]

Taoism and Confucianism formed the basis of North Vietnam's national philosophy. Taoism is a philosophical theory that an underlying agential force known as the *Tao*, controls everything in the universe to maintain harmony. Taoists see mankind's existence in the universe as a relatively small aspect and minor actor within the universe. Confucianism is a philosophical theory of mankind's relationship with society and government to maintain Taoist espoused harmony. Taoist and Confucian philosophers sought harmony through collectivism, which is a principle in which individuals in a group prioritize the group's desires over personal desires. The North Vietnamese considered themselves as part of a collective identity that projected unified opinions and actions. Taoism and Confucianism provided the framework of North Vietnam's national philosophy in which North Vietnamese people processed knowledge.[12]

North Vietnam's national values consisted of the Taoist espoused concept of harmony, filial piety, and reserved behavior. North Vietnamese society valued a harmonious state of equilibrium in which people in a family and society cooperated with each other on a daily basis. North Vietnamese society believed that harmonious relations between society and government

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[11] Harvey Smith, Donald Bernier, Frederica Bunge, Frances Rintz, Rinn-Sup Shinn, and Suzanne Teleki, *North Vietnam: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1982), 36-37.

[12] Thomas Cleary, *The Taoist Classics: The Collected Translations of Thomas Cleary* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1994), 3; Henry Rosemont, Jr. "Rights-Bearing Individuals and Role-Bearing Persons," in *Rules, Rituals, and Responsibility: Essays Dedicated to Herbert Fingarette*, ed. Mary Bockover (Chicago: Open Court, 1991), 90.

emanated from familial piety at home. North Vietnamese society valued reserved behavior because people and groups of people with reserved behavior fostered an environment for harmony and cooperation to flourish.[13]

In the second section, the author analyzed the North Vietnamese Army by examining its heritage, philosophy, and values. The North Vietnamese Army's heritage dates back to 1941 when, as the armed branch of the Viet Minh, it fought against the French for independence. In that same year, when Japanese forces seized Indochina from the French, the Viet Minh fought against the Japanese for independence. In 1944, the Indochinese Communist Party established the Armed Propaganda Team to proliferate political messages to Vietnamese society. After World War II ended in 1945, Japan relinquished control of Indochina back to France. The North Vietnamese Army fought against the French once again for independence. After the North Vietnamese Army defeated the French in the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, the North Vietnamese Army fought US forces from 1955 to 1975. The North Vietnamese Army's heritage of fighting against various nations from the mid 1900s solidified its organizational philosophy of a "People's Army" fighting a "People's War."[14]

The North Vietnamese Army, translated from Vietnamese as the People's Army of Vietnam, maintained a philosophy that it represented and consisted of North Vietnamese society. The North Vietnamese Army's concept of a "People's War" derived from the full mobilization of society to support or serve the military. The North Vietnamese Army perceived itself as a manifestation of society's enmity against aggression. From this perception, the North Vietnamese Army emerged as an armed political organization to unify and defend the sovereignty of Vietnam. It had a dual command structure in which politicians and military leaders shared

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[13] Lin Yutang, ed. and trans., *The Wisdom of Confucius* (New York City: Random House, Inc., 1996), 144-146.

[14] Michael L. Lanning and Dan Cragg, *Inside the VC and the NVA* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), *19*-22.

command of the same unit from the platoon level up to the Ministry of Defense. Adhering to the collectivist philosophy within Taoism and Confucianism, the North Vietnamese Army held a collective leadership philosophy in which leaders sought collaboration and cooperation to make collective decisions.[15]

The North Vietnamese Army valued Confucian espoused patience and organizational management skills. Its historic inferiority in military capabilities led the organization to value patience as an equalizer to seek tactical opportunities and grow enmity within society against aggressors. The North Vietnamese valued organizational management skills because efficient management of troops and materiel optimized its units to effectively fight against more powerful adversaries. The North Vietnamese Army's most senior officer, General Vo Nguyen Giap, led the North Vietnamese Army throughout the mid-1900s.[16]

In the third section, the author assessed General Vo Nguyen Giap's actions during the mid-1900s by analyzing his heritage, philosophy, and values. Giap's heritage consisted of his upbringing and his education and experience as a Vietnamese in French Indochina. His father, educated in Chinese philosophy, raised Giap in North Vietnam and taught him Chinese classic literature and philosophy. As a young adult, Giap continued his education in French Indochina's most prestigious academies and graduated from the only university in French Indochina. His ability to learn and communicate in Vietnamese, Chinese, and French provided a diverse range of sociopolitical awareness. Upon university graduation, he became a political activist in the Indochinese Communist Party. Due to his achievements as a political activist, Giap became the leader of the North Vietnamese Army. Through the combination of North Vietnamese national

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[15] Ho Chi Minh, *On Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920-66,* ed. Bernard Fall (New York City: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1967), 139-140; Lanning and Cragg, *Inside the VC and the NVA*, 85-86.

[16] Ibid., 85-86, 99; Douglas Pike, *PAVN: People's Army of Vietnam* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1986)*,* 195.

heritage, North Vietnamese Army organizational heritage, and his personal heritage, Giap inculcated various philosophies and theories to establish his personal philosophy.[17]

Giap's personal philosophy consisted of pragmatism in which he fused Taoist morality, Confucian-based governance, Chinese-based strategy, radical Western political ideologies of Marxism and Leninism, and Western military tactics. Taoism provided Giap a Universalist perspective in which seemingly conflicting ideas and beliefs coexist and complement each other in harmony through a concept known as *yin* and *yang*. His philosophy of engaging and winning in warfare required the establishment of moral causality because the Tao empowered people and societies with moral motives. He philosophized war as politics, not a continuation of politics by other means, but equating war as the same as politics. Throughout the mid-1900s, Giap mobilized Vietnamese society to fight protracted wars against France, Japan, and the United States.[18]

Giap valued social justice, morality, patience, organizational management, and Western-based tactics. His value of social justice drove him to seek communism as a means to achieve social harmony. He valued morality as a means to fight and as an end to live. He valued patience and exercised it in his tactical and strategic decisions as the leader of the North Vietnamese Army. When Giap fought against US forces in the 1960s, he constantly directed his army to wait to conduct a major offensive until North Vietnam attained a sufficient level of societal enmity and military capabilities. Giap had mastery of organizing and managing troops and materiel, which he valued as necessary leadership traits. In the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, his ability to organize, transport, and synchronize artillery, infantry, and logistics resulted in French defeat and an end to French rule. Giap valued the Western-based tactics he studied during his youth at the

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[17] Peter Macdonald, *Giap: The Victor in Vietnam* (New York City: WW Norton & Company, Inc., 1993), 18-19; John Colvin, *Giap: Volcano Under Snow* (New York City: Soho Press, Inc., 1996), 24-25.

[18] Vo Nguyen Giap, *People's War, People's Army* (Sevenoaks, UK: Pickle Partners Publishing, 1962), 50.

Indochinese University. When he became a leader in the North Vietnamese Army, he tried to emulate Napoleon Bonaparte's bold attacks, and soldier-author T.E. Lawrence's method of fighting against a superior force.[19]

In the fourth section, the author analyzed the United States through a cultural lens by examining its heritage, philosophy, and values. US heritage had its roots in Christianity, British colonialism, and independence from Great Britain. The first English Pilgrims settled in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620 due to religious convictions. The original thirteen British colonies established a heavy British influence in US heritage. The American Revolutionary War in 1775 and subsequent Declaration of Independence in 1776 marked key historical events in US heritage that influenced and shaped US philosophy and values. Conversely, since the original thirteen colonies had a Western-based philosophy that carried over from Great Britain, understanding US heritage informs what philosophy carried over.[20]

US national philosophy combines Greek philosophical perspectives on personal agency with pragmatism and science. Ancient Greek philosophers provided the roots of Western philosophy of personal agency, which carried over to Great Britain and the thirteen colonies. Ancient Greek philosophers provided a perspective that humans have individuated personalities with independent volitions. In the 1840s, French political philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville described a US philosophy that articulated how US citizens think in a pragmatic framework and

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[19] Ang Cheng Guan, *Ending the Vietnam War: The Vietnamese Communists' Perspective* (New York City: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 160-165; Robert O'Neill, *General Giap: Politician and Strategist* (New York City: Frederick Praeger, Inc., 1969), 10.

[20] Allan R. Millet, Peter Maslowski, and William B. Feis, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States from 1607 to 2012* (New York City: Free Press, 2012), 1, 50, 60.

believe that people can come to understand the world through scientific reasoning in causal logic.[21]

US national values consist of individualism, self-reliance, and freedom. From the philosophy of personal agency, US society values individualism, which emphasizes an individual's independent actions to control one's life. US society values self-reliance throughout an individual's life. One can evidence an instance of the national value of self-reliance by understanding the retirement home concept abundant in the United States. Contrary to many Eastern nations, US citizens aim to amass enough wealth during their employed lives so they can live independently, either in a retirement home or through paid professional assistance, without the assistance of their children. US society values the freedom to live and choose however anyone desires as long as those actions do not impose on the freedom of others. Stemming from freedom, US society values the ability to select from multiple options. Even in daily life, US society values the ability to choose different foods to eat and clothes to wear. At the level of national policy and strategy, government agencies provide a menu of options for the US President before making decisions. The US Army plays a role of providing options as a service department within the US military. Since the US Army derives from the US citizenry, a close relationship between US society and the US Army exists.[22]

In the fifth section, the author analyzed the US Army by examining its heritage, philosophy, and values. The US Army has a heritage of service to the nation and upholding morality. On June 14, 1775, the Second Continental Congress established the American Continental Army. The US Army prides itself as the oldest US institution. It served the nation by fighting for freedom in the American Revolutionary War. During the US Civil War in the mid-

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[21] Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Eduardo Nolla, trans. James Schleifer (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2012), 688-689.

[22] Gary Althen, *American Ways: A Guide for Foreigners in the United States* (Boston: Intercultural Press, 1988), 3.

1800s, the US Army fought to preserve the Union and to end slavery. It fought in both World Wars to defend the nation and secure national interests. The 180 campaign and battle streamers the US Army flag adorns from over two centuries of fighting represent loyal service to the nation and society. [23]

From a philosophical perspective, the US Army perceives itself as a loyal, apolitical servant that exists to defend the US Constitution and serve society by subordinating itself to civil government authority. It willfully subordinates itself under civilian authority to pursue policy aims regardless of the differing political ideologies within politics that create policy. In warfare, the US Army perceives itself as a guild of artisans who artfully combine the various inter-service and intra-service branches in the prosecution of warfare.[24]

In war and warfare, the US Army values service and combined arms warfare. In war, it values the service it provides to civil government authorities and equates service to the government as service. In warfare, it values combined arms warfare as the pinnacle of tactical mastery. Combined arms warfare requires the synthesis of intra-service and inter-service branches, which puts the US Army at the center of orchestrating tactics to achieve victory. General Creighton Abrams's tactical competence in combined arms warfare during his service in World War II contributed to his rise in leadership positions in the US Army.[25]

In the sixth section, the author assessed General Creighton Abrams's actions during the mid-1900s by analyzing his heritage, philosophy, and values. Abrams's heritage in the early 1900s consisted of scholarly and athletic achievement amidst a semi-rural farm community in Massachusetts. He attended the US Military Academy and branched as a cavalry officer upon

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[23] Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 1, *The Army* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), v.

[24] Carl Builder, *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 33.

[25] Ibid., 33.

graduation during the interwar period. He excelled as a battalion commander in World War II. In the Korean War, he effectively worked as a corps chief of staff. In 1968, he took command of US Military Assistance Command–Vietnam.[26]

Abrams's personal philosophy mirrored the US Army's organizational philosophy of loyal service and subordination to civil government authority. In the early 1960s, in the midst of the civil rights movement, Abrams coordinated civil military affairs under President John F. Kennedy. His application of the US Army's apolitical philosophy of subordinating to civil authority resonated with the US Army's senior leaders. In the Vietnam War, Abrams saw himself as an artisan of warfare who perceived his role as conducting combined arms warfare and arranging various military lines of effort to achieve his President's policy aims.[27]

Abrams valued his faith and integrity. Throughout his command in Vietnam, he sought prayer and spiritual mentorship from his Chaplain. Faith connected Abrams's professional career with his personal life as a husband and father. From his faith, he espoused integrity as the commander of US Military Assistance Command–Vietnam. Prior to Abrams's command, an atmosphere of distrust grew within US society—people did not believe the US Army's positive assessments of progress in Vietnam. Upon taking command, Abrams directed his staff to report facts to allow the media and US society to assess the situation for themselves.[28]

The following figure depicts a model of how understanding a country's national culture and an army's organizational culture provides a foundation to become culturally astute. An organizational worldview adds a layer within the fabric of a national worldview. One's personal

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[26] Lewis Sorley, *Thunderbolt: General Creighton Abrams and the Army of His Times* (New York City: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 14-15, 36, 164.

[27] Lewis Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1999), 23, 59.

[28] William Hammond, *Public Affairs: The Military and the Media 1968-1973* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1996), 40.

worldview adds another layer over the organizational and national worldview. Although analysis of individuals and groups that differ from a national worldview is not within the scope of this monograph, understanding that not all members within a society have the same national worldview is important. Individuals who do not share the same national worldview are not outcasts, rebels, or criminals. There are many reasons why an individual or a group of individuals may not share the same national worldview. Recent immigrants and immigrants' children who reside in the country may attain the worldview of their ancestral homeland. An individual may simply processes information differently or develop to hold different worldviews from the rest of society. Individuals who commit to radical organizations can also develop differing worldviews.
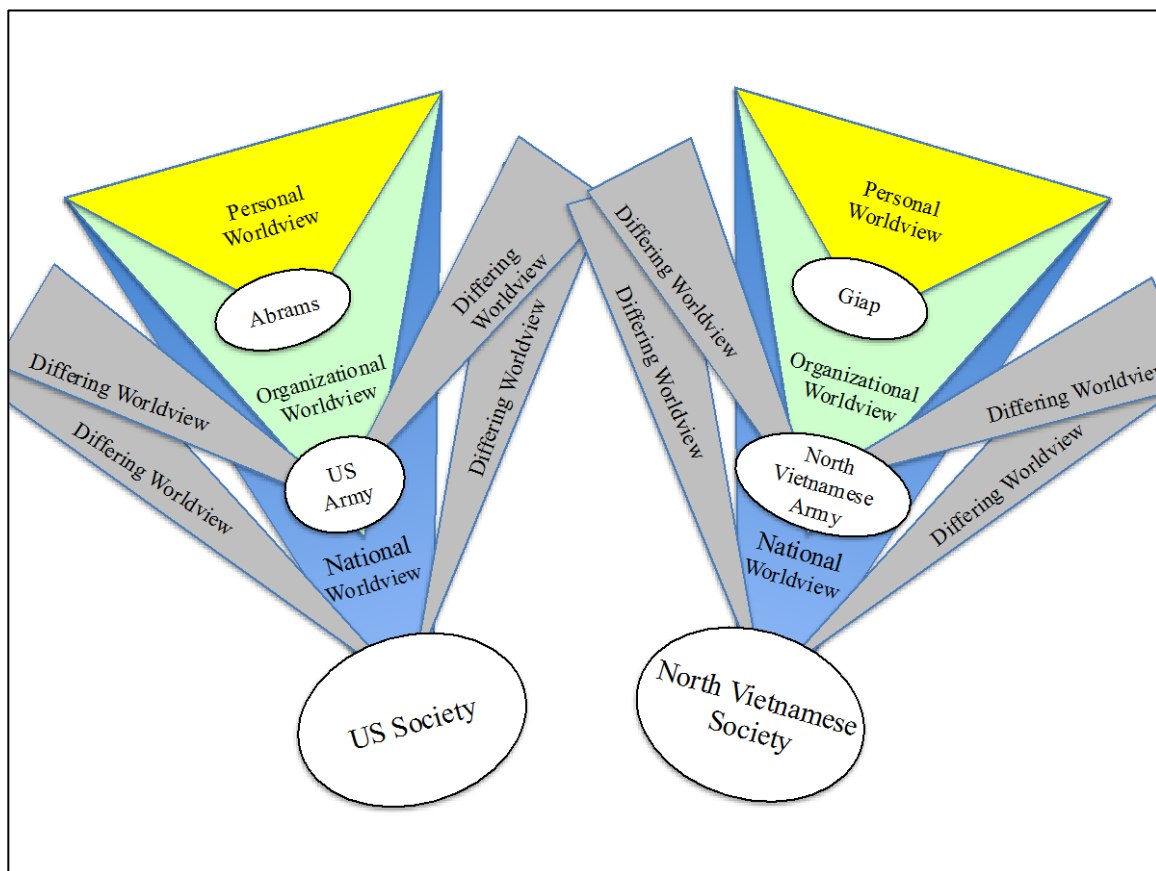

Figure 1. Relationship model of worldviews of a nation, army organization, and individual

Source: Figure 1 drawn by the author.

Both Abrams and Giap displayed complementary behaviors and actions of their respective army and country. Understanding cultural identities by analyzing the heritage, philosophy, and values of a country and military organization provides a foundation to become culturally astute. Mapping the complementary relationship between an individual's cultural identity with the country and army, enables US Army leaders to better anticipate future behavior. Understanding oneself is surprisingly not intuitive. Cultural perspectives and behaviors are dynamic and constantly change through social interaction, but change in a relatively cohesive manner over time.

Literature Review

The US Army's Training and Doctrine Command defines culture as "the set of distinctive features of a society or group, including but not limited to values, beliefs, and norms, that ties together members of that society or group and that drives action and behavior."[29] Factors that shape culture include history, religion, ethnic identity, language, and nationality.[30] People learn and pass culture onto others through social interaction. Culture includes a process of transmission and learning, reinforcement, and sharing within a population. In the same population, two or more cultures can exist simultaneously. An individual can also identify with or adhere to multiple cultures. With the seemingly broad context that culture entails, US Army leaders may find it

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[29] Department of the Army, *Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009), 7.

[30] William Wunderle, *Through the Lens of Cultural Awareness: A Primer for US Armed Forces Deploying to Arab and Middle Eastern Countries* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2007), 9.

difficult to conceptualize and contextualize culture in ways that are relevant to military operations.[31]

The purpose of understanding culture is not to forecast or predict future behavior. Understanding culture enables leaders to gain deeper awareness of the operational environment to anticipate possible future behaviors stemming from cultural identity. Cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz, wrote a seminal book in the anthropological community on the phenomenon of culture titled *The Interpretation of Cultures.* Taking a constructivist perspective, Geertz stated that culture exists in the mind and is any human behavior with symbolic action. The ontology of culture as patterned conduct or a frame of mind is irrelevant. His purpose for understanding culture laid in its semiotic utility. Culture is not a type of power or something that attributes to the direct causation of behaviors. Culture is a context that one can intelligibly describe, which Geertz called "thick description." From Geertz's descriptive theory of culture, US Army leaders can improve their awareness of cultural influences in an operational environment. Apart from a constructivist perspective, however, US Army leaders should increase cultural awareness to anticipate a series of possible behaviors based on cultural factors. Anticipating possible action provides flexibility in plans and operations while predicting action narrows and constrains them.[32]

Cultural awareness is the ability to understand the effects of culture on people's values and behaviors. In a military context, cultural awareness is the understanding of the connection between a population's culture and its effects on military operations. At a basic level, cultural awareness is information about a particular culture. As the collection of cultural information

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[31] *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Understanding Human Dynamics* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2009), 72, accessed November 29, 2015, http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/ADA495025.pdf.

[32] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York City: Basic Books, 1973), 10-14.

deepens, a more comprehensive understanding of the particular culture develops.[33] Sun-Tzu focused on the importance of knowing one's own identity and the enemy's identity to be successful in war.[34] Cultural awareness arms US Army leaders with self-awareness about one's own biases as well as insight into the adversary's likely intent and motivation. It can also provide insight into the population and its worldview.

Framing cultural aspects in an operational environment requires a military leader to make generalizations while also maintaining a holistic view of the dynamic interrelations within a society. On generalizations, treating any body of individuals as one homogenous agent with a distinct personality and behavior pattern may raise concerns. Even at an individual level, personality sketches are generalizations and reductionist in nature. A personality sketch is subjective and can be grossly inaccurate without discernment. A human being is a complex organism in constant interaction with a complex environment that includes other individuals and organizations. Institutions and societies, made up of many diverse individuals, are more than the sum of those complex individuals. Any personality characterizations of a specific culture will never be perfect because they are simply models. Framing the relevant cultural aspects of an operational environment requires constant reassessment in gaining deeper understanding. Gaining deeper understanding of the operational environment leads to a more effective operational approach towards reaching desired conditions.[35]

By studying the fundamental principles of a specific culture, military leaders can effectively apply their understanding to operations. Author of *Operational Culture for the Warfighter*, Baraka Salmoni, generalized three approaches that military leaders commonly choose when entering into a foreign operating environment. The first approach is mirror imaging in

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[33] Wunderle, *Through the Lens of Cultural Awareness,* 10.

[34] Sun-Tzu, *The Art of War,* trans. Cleary, 85.

[35] Builder, *The Masks of War*, 7-9.

which one assumes that people behave similarly to one's own culture. In mirror imaging, people are blind to differences from one culture group to another. The second approach focuses on the differences of a foreign culture without considering any of its similarities with one's own culture. This approach overwhelms the observer to cognitive paralysis and avoidance of the cultural environment. In this approach, leaders often establish a framework that attempts to separate culture from operations or give niche tasks to specialized units that deal with specific aspects of an operation. The third approach views culture as a logical system, which one understands through social science theories and principles. Although human behavior is complex and thus, unpredictable and variable, a level of order exists within social and cultural groups. These groups organize according to logical, understandable principles.[36] Author Dima Adamsky wrote a book, *The Culture of Military Innovation*, in which he assessed that most Americans fall under the category of mirror imaging due to an ethnocentric characteristic of US society. If Adamsky's assessment is accurate, US Army leaders must fight an uphill battle against US society and the US Army in not only understanding foreign cultures, but in communicating the relevance of culture.[37]

North Vietnamese National Culture

National Heritage

Understanding North Vietnam's heritage reveals why North Vietnamese society acquired and maintained a Chinese philosophical worldview combined with a normalized understanding of national struggle. Taoism and Confucianism permeate most of Vietnamese culture because China

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[36] Barak A. Salmoni, *Operational Culture for the Warfighter: Principles and Application* (Quantico: Marine Corps University Press, 2011), 13.

[37] Dima Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the US, and Israel* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 75-77.

ruled Vietnam for over a thousand years beginning in 111 BC. During its thousand-year rule, China significantly influenced Vietnamese governance, education, and culture.[38] When the Chinese Han dynasty conquered Vietnam, the Chinese left Vietnam's ruling elites intact and concomitantly sent Chinese immigrants into Northern Vietnam. Many Chinese immigrants interacted and intermarried with the Vietnamese. The Vietnamese ruling elites learned the Chinese language and studied Taoism and Confucianism. After the dissolution of the Chinese Tang dynasty in 907 CE, the Vietnamese overthrew Chinese rule and became an independent state. Despite Vietnamese independence, the influence of over a thousand years of Chinese rule permanently infused Chinese cultural behaviors into Vietnam.[39]

During the period of Vietnam's independence, from 907 to 1858, the Vietnamese Tran clan rose to power and established many Chinese methods of governance. The Tran kingdom used the Chinese model of meritocracy for recruiting candidates for government service. The Vietnamese kingdom tested candidates on their knowledge of Taoism, Confucianism, Chinese language, and literature. This model for recruiting and selection epitomized the infusion of Taoism and Confucianism throughout Vietnamese governance and society.[40]

In 1858, French Emperor Louis Napoleon III conquered and subsequently colonized Vietnam, which introduced European education and rapid social change to Vietnamese society. The French government officially eliminated the name "Vietnam" and replaced it with Indochina. French nationals took over important governmental positions and centralized administrative systems. French improvements in communication and transportation networks attracted Vietnamese scholars and workers to migrate to urban centers. Scholars studied Western

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[38] L. Shelton Woods, *Vietnam: A Global Studies Handbook* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2002), 14.

[39] Smith et al., *North Vietnam,* 36-37.

[40] Ronald Cima, ed., *Vietnam: A Country Study,* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1989), 16.

ideologies, which included liberal and radical political ideologies such as socialism and communism.[41]

Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 spurred an era of Vietnamese nationalism. A distinguished scholar named Phan Boi Chau initiated a Vietnamese nationalist movement. Chau used the Russo-Japanese War as a model in theorizing that any Asian nation with sufficient technical knowledge and equipment could prevail over a Western power. In 1906, Chau went to Japan and China to study and write about his nationalist movement. Chau's writings amassed a large following, especially among the liberal, scholarly elite. In 1930, the various factions within the Vietnamese nationalist movement united under the Indochinese Communist Party led by Ho Chi Minh. Ho Chi Minh became an iconic leader throughout North Vietnam who symbolized the North Vietnamese struggle towards unification and independence. [42]

In 1940, during World War II, Nazi Germany seized Paris, which led the French Vichy government to accede control of Vietnam to Japan. From 1940 to 1945, Vietnam's communist-led coalition group, the Viet Minh, fought against the Japanese. In 1945, after Japan's defeat in

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[41] Woods, *Vietnam,* 43. During the 1600s, European missionaries entered Vietnam and converted tens of thousands of Vietnamese to Catholicism. During the 1840s to 1850s, Vietnam rulers imprisoned and persecuted many European missionaries and particularly, many Spanish missionaries. In 1858, French Emperor, Louis Napoleon III, sought military action in Vietnam. Napoleon III was married to Eugena who was a Spanish Catholic. He claimed that he was taking action against religious persecution. His conquest in Vietnam initiated French colonization of Vietnam. Smith et al., *North Vietnam,* 48.

[42] Smith et al., *North Vietnam,* 50-51; Jean Lacouture, *Ho Chi Minh: A Political Biography,* ed. Jane C. Seitz, trans. Peter Wiles (New York City: Vintage Books, 1968), 262. Ho Chi Minh became the President of North Vietnam when he declared North Vietnam an independent nation in 1945. He lived in Paris for six years from 1917 to 1923 during his early twenties where he cultivated his socialist and communist ideology. He also visited Boston and New York during his mid-twenties. When he proclaimed Vietnamese independence in September 2, 1945, he cited the US Declaration of Independence in his opening speech. He said, "All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." When Ho Chi Minh cited the US Declaration, he spoke with a genuine desire regarding the meaning of Vietnamese independence. He thought that US government leaders would support his stance on independence against French colonization. He mentored Vo Nguyen Giap when Giap was an impressionable teenager. As Ho Chi Minh's loyal pupil, Giap absorbed and inculcated virtually everything Ho Chi Minh believed.

World War II, France tried to reassert its colonial relationship, but now with an empowered Vietnamese government. On March 6, 1946, French diplomat, Jean Sainteny, and Ho Chi Minh signed an accord in which France recognized Vietnam as a free state with its own government, army, and treasury, but still under the French Union.[43]

In November 1946, an incident in Haiphong, Vietnam, sparked the war between France and Vietnam that lasted until 1954. The Viet Minh killed twenty-three French sailors coming into Haiphong port, which led to a series of French counteractions that included a French cruiser opening fire onto a crowd that killed six thousand unarmed, Vietnamese civilians. In 1954, North Vietnam gained independence after the Viet Minh won a decisive battle at Dien Bien Phu. The Geneva Conference in 1954 split Indochina into North and South Vietnam. Shortly thereafter, the North Vietnamese fought against the United States. Ho Chi Minh aimed to unify South and North Vietnam into one independent country. North Vietnam fought with numerous countries in a struggle for survival.[44]

National Philosophy

Taoist philosophers assert that a mysterious force, known as the *Tao*, connects and controls all physical matter and metaphysical conceptions in the universe towards a natural equilibrium—or harmonious order.[45] Taoists understand the *Tao* as an omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient force that has agency. Taoism provides a framework for humans' relationship

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[43] Bernard B. Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams: A Political and Military Analysis* (New York City: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 60-63.

[44] Smith et al., *North Vietnam,* 32-33.

[45] Philip J. Ivanhoe, trans., *The Daodejing of Lao-tzu* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2003), xv. In the 3rd century BC during the Chinese Warring States Period (403-221 BC), Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu, described the *Tao* in his text, *Tao Te Ching.* Lao-Tzu theorized that the *Tao* connected the physical and metaphysical mysteries of the universe. Within this umbrella context of the *Tao*, Lao-Tzu provided a foundation for societal behavior, governance, and war.

with everything they encounters in the universe including a spiritual realm. Taoists perceive humans as a small aspect within the universe in which they have a limited role with the universe.[46]

Taoists theorized the concept of the Mandate of Heaven. Within the theory of the Mandate of Heaven, Taoists think that if a greedy ruler brutally conquers a peaceful civilization, then *Tao* forces will eventually correct the situation, perhaps through another war, by overthrowing the greedy ruler to restore peace. The Vietnamese believed that the Tao would eventually correct a ruler's immoral acts if a ruler acted against the Mandate of Heaven. If Vietnamese government leaders believed that they acted morally in accordance with the Mandate of Heaven, then the *Tao* would empower them to achieve their policy aims.[47]

Taoists believe that going to war in defense against oppression would engender the support of the *Tao* force, given the morality of the motive. Taoists denounce wars of aggression because, in their view, a war disturbs a peaceful, harmonious community. Sun-Tzu was a Taoist who believed that a ruler should only go to war as a last resort to defend against aggression. Sun-Tzu thought that selfish human acts such as seizing someone else's territory disturbed the natural order of the *Tao*. Whenever humans acted against the *Tao*, the *Tao* ultimately acted against those human actions to restore order. The Vietnamese thought that the *Tao* was on the side of an

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[46] Cleary, *The Taoist Classics*, 3; James K. Feibleman, *Understanding Oriental Philosophy: A Popular Account for the Western World* (New York City: Horizon Press, 1976), 144-150. The breakdown of the Chinese word, Tao, provides a better understanding of its concept. The Chinese components that make up the word, Tao (道), means "head" (首, shou) and "going" (辶, chuo). Shou can simultaneously mean consciousness, essence, or primary. It can also mean the "light of heaven" in which Lao-tzu perceived the mind to have heavenly origins. Chuo can mean travelling or walking. Tao can mean a path, way, principle, or a system of order. It can also mean the existence of the universe itself. Every art and science is called a tao, or a way, but the source of everything, the source of all art and science, is translated as the Tao, or the Way (capitalized).

[47] Philip J. Ivanhoe, trans., *The Daodejing of Lao-tzu* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2003), xv.

oppressed society and held that the moral cause for going to war would result in victory for the oppressed society.[48]

Taoists think that war *is* a political affair. Sun-Tzu stated, "War is a vital matter of a state. It is the field on which life or death is determined and the road that leads to either survival or ruin."[49] Taoists do not think that war is a continuation of political affairs; rather it is the conduct of political affairs. This subtle difference between war as another means of political affairs and war as a political affair makes a difference in how Taoists understand and perceive war. Taoists categorize war and diplomacy as a single political affair. During the mid-1900s, the North Vietnamese did not separate combatants in warfare from politicians in diplomacy within political affairs. Like Taoism, Confucianism also heavily influenced Vietnamese culture.[50]

Confucianism is a philosophy that complements Taoism by emphasizing social ethics between mankind and the government to create a harmonious community. During the fifth century BC, Chinese philosopher Confucius wrote the book *The Analects* in which he described the flourishing of humans as the pinnacle of effective governance and public administration. Confucius philosophized that a government exists to maintain harmony between society and the natural world, including heaven. Confucius theorized that ritual propriety and customs, rather than laws and coercion, led to spiritual and material wellbeing. Through Confucius's teachings in propriety, ceremony, calligraphy, calculation, martial arts, and music, Confucius cultivated moral character.[51]

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[48] Robert G. Henricks, *Lao-Tzu: Tao Te Ching: A New Translation Based on the Recently Discovered Ma-Wang-Tui Texts* (New York City: Random House, Inc., 1993), xxxii; Woods, *Vietnam*, 142.

[49] Sun-Tzu, *Sun-Tzu,* trans. Ames, 103.

[50] Neil Jamieson, *Understanding Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, Ltd., 1993), 11.

[51] Sun-Tzu, *Sun-Tzu,* trans. Ames, 52.

Both Taoist and Confucian philosophers held the concept of *yin* and *yang*. The literal translation of yin means "shady" whereas yang means "sunny." *Yin* and *yang* forces are interdependent and complementary. *Yin* and *yang* does not mean the interaction of opposites or opposing forces. Through the Taoist and Confucian understanding of *yin* and *yang* and societal cooperation to achieve harmony, Confucius fostered collectivism.[52]

The North Vietnamese considered themselves as part of a collective identity that projected unified opinions and actions. The North Vietnamese did not consider themselves as independent individuals with unique identities with a personal sense of agency. Confucian philosophers focused on self-control through virtuous conduct starting with the family, which branched out to the government. A North Vietnamese man considered himself first and foremost as a member of a family, followed by a clan and village. On the Confucian perspective of identity, a North Vietnamese man did not think of himself in isolation, but as a totality of the roles that encompassed his family, clan, village, or government depending on the scope of a situation. A North Vietnamese man did not consider himself to have a personal identity with an associated ability to act as an individual because personal agency might conflict with the collective agency of his particular group.[53]

Confucian philosophers framed individuals as part of a collective society in which mutual obligations served as a guide to virtuous behavior. Each individual had clear roles in an organized, hierarchical system. Any confrontation or intellectual debates within this system were

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[52] Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York City: Ballantine Books, 1998), 3.

[53] Henry Rosemont, Jr. "Rights-Bearing Individuals and Role-Bearing Persons," in *Rules, Rituals, and Responsibility: Essays Dedicated to Herbert Fingarette*, ed. Mary Bockover (Chicago: Open Court, 1991), 90.

counterproductive towards harmony, and thus discouraged. Individual rights became one's share of the society's rights as a whole, not a method for individualistic choices.[54]

Confucian societies cultivated passive-aggressive behavior if an individual disagreed within a group, especially within a group of peers. Open disagreement equated to disrespect. The socially acceptable alternative to disagreeing within a group required passive-aggressive behavior in which an individual abstained from expressing further disagreements. Maintaining passive-aggressive behavior allowed the psychological existence of collective harmony. The Vietnamese regularly exercised passive-aggressiveness in their society and in governance as a respectful means to deal with disagreement while maintaining collective agency. Taoist and Confucian philosophy permeated Vietnamese society as a resilient part of Vietnamese culture despite the French colonization of Vietnam in the nineteenth century.[55]

National Values

The North Vietnamese valued harmony, which equated to cooperation within society. Within Taoism, North Vietnamese society defined harmony as a balanced state of tranquility and calmness between mankind and nature. Confucius defined the presence of harmony as that state of being when humans flourish in daily life without oppression from domestic authority or external aggressors. The North Vietnamese concept of harmony required cooperation between all members of society to act within their defined roles. The North Vietnamese value of harmony cultivated morality and collectivism.[56]

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[54] Richard E. Nisbett, *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently…and Why* (New York City: Free Press, 2003), 6.

[55] Rosemont, "Rights-Bearing Individuals and Role-Bearing Persons," 90. Sungmoon Kim, *Confucian Democracy in East Asia: Theory and Practice* (New York City: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 39; Nisbett, *The Geography of Thought,* 5.

[56] Sun-Tzu, *The Art of War,* trans. Cleary, 6-8; Sun-Tzu, *Sun-Tzu: The Art of Warfare*, trans. Ames, 64.

The North Vietnamese valued filial piety, which influenced society towards collective agency. Confucius asserted that a country's welfare started with a people's obedience to their respective parents. Confucius emphasized, "As a younger brother and son, be filial at home and deferential in the community…Love the multitude broadly and be intimate with those in authority."[57] He elaborated on individual obligations between emperor and subject, parent and child, husband and wife, friends, and neighbors, to maintain social harmony.[58]

Confucian philosophers emphasized individuals to maintain reserved behavior as a method for elders and people in authority to form collective agency. Within the family, Confucian philosophers taught that children should only speak when spoken to by an elder member of the family. In a school setting, a student only spoke when a teacher asked that specific student a direct question. Within government, people with higher authority led discussions while people of lower authority upheld reserved behavior unless called upon. Vietnamese society considered the act of openly voicing a family's collective opinion to an elder extremely disrespectful.[59]

North Vietnam's national values throughout the 1900s continued to adhere to Taoist and Confucius philosophies. The Vietnamese continued to believe that the *Tao* unified and maintained order in the universe. They believed in collectivism and collective leadership. They continued to uphold individuals toward morality, filial piety, and obligatory social roles. Even after French colonization, the thousand years of Chinese influence displayed a resilient Taoist and Confucian culture throughout North Vietnamese society.[60]

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[57] Yutang, *The Wisdom of Confucius*, 225-228.

[58] Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius,* 72.

[59] Yutang, *The Wisdom of Confucius*, 144-146.

[60] Smith et al., *North Vietnam,* 100.

North Vietnamese Army Culture

From the 1940s to 1975, the North Vietnamese Army had a unique military culture due to its political framework and Taoist and Confucian philosophical worldview. From an understanding of the North Vietnamese Army's organizational culture, one can frame the organization's personality and identity. Understanding an organization's identity provides a method to assess likely behaviors. Understanding likely behaviors provides military leaders a deeper understanding of the operational environment, which assists in more effective planning and execution of operations.[61]

Organizational Heritage

The origins of the North Vietnamese Army date to the commencement of its role as the armed branch of the Viet Minh during its fight for independence against the Japanese during World War II. In 1941, the Indochinese Communist Party established a coalition with non-Communist groups to form the Viet Minh for the purpose of conducting guerrilla warfare. During the later part of World War II, from 1944 to 1945, the Viet Minh rescued downed US pilots, provided intelligence to the Allies, and proliferated anti-Japanese messages to Vietnamese society. The Viet Minh virtually received all of the credit for anti-Japanese activities and garnered popular national support.[62]

In 1946, the Viet Minh, which numbered fifty thousand people, fought against the French with the military equipment that the United States and China provided during World War II. At the time of Viet Minh's victory against the French in 1954, the Viet Minh operated as a coalition of various, ethnically and religiously aligned, organizations. US military advisors began showing up in Vietnam in 1955 and steadily increased their presence. The Viet Minh responded to the

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[61] Lanning and Cragg, *Inside the VC and the NVA,* 85-86, 99.

[62] Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams*, 60-63.

increase of US advisors by increasing its troop capacity as well. By 1957, the Viet Minh numbered approximately two hundred thousand people, which outgrew its original purpose of a guerilla army conducting guerilla warfare. Simultaneously, the army's decentralized organization structure constrained its ability to attain the capabilities a modern military army.[63]

In 1957, the Vietnamese Communist Party reorganized the Viet Minh into a professional and modern North Vietnamese Army under the slogan, "Positively Build a Powerful People's Army and Gradually Advance to Professionalism and Modernization."[64] The North Vietnamese Army increased its troop capacity, added logistics units, introduced regulations on military service, and standardized ranks and pay. The Party established the purpose of its army to liberate South Vietnam and unify it under the Party.[65] In 1964, North Vietnamese General Song Hau wrote about the North Vietnamese Army's relationship with the Vietnamese Communist Party:

> The history of the People's Army of Vietnam is the history of the armed struggle of the vanguard party of the Vietnamese working class, the Indochinese Communist Party of the past, the Vietnam Lao Dong Party of the present. The source of our army's strength first and foremost is the leadership of the Party.[66]

Hau described the intimate and symbiotic relationship between the Vietnamese political organization and its military, which stemmed from the two-command military structure. From this structure, the North Vietnamese Army inherited a communist political ideology. Its two-command structure continued until 1983.[67]

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[63] Fall, *The Two Viet*-Nams, 75.

[64] Macdonald, *Giap,* 109.

[65] Pike, *PAVN*, 42.

[66] Hao Song, *Ten Years of Fighting and Building the Vietnamese People's Army* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1965), 1.

[67] Thayer, *The Vietnam People's Army,* 1-5.

Organizational Philosophy

First, understanding how the North Vietnamese Army organized itself as an armed political organization provides a crucial aspect of the organizational culture of the North Vietnamese Army. North Vietnamese political leaders framed the North Vietnamese Army as an armed political organization from their understanding of warfare as a political affair. The Vietnamese Communist Party organized the North Vietnamese Army under a dual command structure in which political leaders embedded into the military hierarchy from the platoon level up to the Ministry of Defense. Two officers commanded at each level. For example, two officers co-led a platoon, which consisted of a political officer and a military officer. The platoon's political officer provided political implications of military operations while the platoon's military officer focused on tactics. If there was a dispute, the political officer was superior. The political officers at the regiment and higher levels, known as political commissars, primarily focused on policy matters.[68]

Due to the intimate relationship between the North Vietnamese Army and the Vietnamese Communist Party, North Vietnamese Army leaders saw their role in society as an armed media tool for the Vietnamese Communist Party. In 1944, the Vietnamese Communist Party initially named the North Vietnamese Army as the "Armed Propaganda Team." Along Leninist meanings, "propaganda" denoted positive methods of influence and persuasion. In 1944, Ho Chi Minh described the primary role of the North Vietnamese Army:

> Politics is more important than military affairs. It is a propaganda unit. In order to operate effectively from a military standpoint, the primary principle is concentration of forces. Because our resistance is one by all of the people, it is necessary to mobilize and arm all of the people.[69]

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[68] Lanning and Cragg, *Inside the VC and the NVA,* 85-86; Pike, *PAVN,* 195.

[69] Ho, *On Revolution*, 139.

The Propaganda Team went into North Vietnamese villages to recruit members into the communist party. The Armed Propaganda Team eventually changed its name to the North Vietnamese Army, which directly translated to the People's Army of Vietnam, but its perception, as an armed political agent, remained the same.[70]

Second, the North Vietnamese Army perceived collectivism as a source of strength. Confucian philosophers emphasized collectivism, a principle in which individuals in a group prioritize the group's desires over personal desires. In 1964, during Creighton Abrams's tour in Germany, he delivered a speech to senior US Army officers on counterinsurgency. Abrams quoted Jean Larteguy's novel *The Centurion:*

> What gives the communist armies their strength is that, with them, everyone is concerned with everything and with everybody else, and that a mere corporal feels that he in some way is responsible for the conduct of the war.[71]

Abrams referred to the collective strength that the North Vietnamese Army cultivated within its organization. Its units regularly conducted after action review sessions known as *Kiem Thao* during training and combat operations, which strengthened their collective mentality.[72]

The *Kiem Thao* sessions provided a method for leaders to supervise and cultivate a collective mentality throughout the entire army. After each training session or combat mission, a unit leader conducted a *Kiem Thao* session, during which he spoke about the political importance of liberating South Vietnam and gaining independence. Leaders critiqued each soldier's actions pertaining to the training exercise or combat mission. Soldiers explained their actions, acknowledged their faults, and expressed methods toward improvement. Lower-ranking soldiers and non-political members did not criticize the higher-ranking or political members during these sessions. The North Vietnamese used these sessions from the tactical level to the strategic level

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[70] Ho, *On Revolution*, 139-140.

[71] Sorley, *Thunderbolt,* 176.

[72] Ibid., 176.

within the Ministry of Defense. All members within the North Vietnamese Army and the paramilitary army of the Viet Cong accepted *Kiem Thao* sessions in which ranking leaders critiqued and molded subordinates' behaviors. Leaders conducted the sessions in the same Confucian style that a father corrected a child or older brother corrected a younger sibling's behaviors for the purpose of bringing harmony and honor to the family. Through *Kiem Thao,* the North Vietnamese Army resolved organizational issues, built unit cohesion, and maintained a collectivist mentality.[73]

Third, the North Vietnamese Army valued self-effacing, collective leadership. Sun-Tzu stated:

> Those who are not arrogant because of their high status…who are wise but can humble themselves, who are strong but can be tolerant, are called courteous generals…Those who consider themselves lacking when they see the wise, who go along with good advice like following a current…are called great generals.[74]

Sun-Tzu described virtuous characteristics of good leaders in which the qualities of humbleness and collective leadership particularly resonated within the North Vietnamese Army. Aggressive, egocentric, or individualistic leaders did not do well or last. Moderate soldiers and cadre leaders who displayed humility and humbleness rose up in rank. The previously described two-command system displayed the North Vietnamese Army's preferred leadership style in which leaders collaborated and collectively made decisions. Collective leadership occurred from the squad level through the highest levels of leadership at the Ministry of Defense.[75]

Fourth, the North Vietnamese Army believed in the primacy of having moral causality in engaging in warfare. Vietnamese Communist Party leaders hesitated in naming the North Vietnamese Army because they did not want to use the term, "army" in naming the newly formed

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[73] Lanning and Cragg, *Inside the VC and the NVA*, 85-86, 99.

[74] Sun-Tzu, *The Art of War,* trans. Thomas Cleary, 222-223.

[75] Lanning and Cragg, *Inside the VC and the NVA,* 91-95.

armed force because the term, "army" had aggressive and offensive tones.[76] In Taoism, armed

conflict had negative connotations that stemmed from an aggressive and self-serving ruler.

Taoism denounced wars of expansion and viewed warfare as an act going against the *Tao*. Lao-

Tzu wrote *Tao Te Ching* as a response during an era of persistent conflict. He wrote:

> Whenever you advise a ruler in the way of *Tao*, counsel him not to use force to conquer the universe…Achieve results, but not through violence. Force is followed by loss of strength. This is not the way of Tao…Weapons are instruments of fear; they are not a wise man's tools. He uses them only when he has no choice.[77]

Sun-Tzu also legitimized armed conflict as a last resort for a benevolent ruler in defending his

country. North Vietnamese Army leaders initiated *Kiem Thao* sessions by reviewing their moral

cause for fighting in the first place. Their soldiers valued and believed that they were fighting for

a moral cause. As an organization, the North Vietnamese Army held a Taoist perspective of the

Mandate of Heaven that the *Tao* would side with the army that fought against a selfish and

oppressing force.[78]

Organizational Values

The North Vietnamese Army valued Confucian-espoused patience and a Taoist outlook

of defense-mindedness. Beginning from its conceptual inception in the 1930s through the 1970s,

the North Vietnamese Army had fewer soldiers and equipment than its adversaries: the militaries

of France, Japan, and the United States. Reflection upon Vietnam's warring history pressured the

North Vietnamese Army to think in terms of survival. From that standpoint, the North

Vietnamese Army valued patient, politically astute leaders who provided flexibility for retreat

and political settlement rather than bold and aggressive, militant leaders. Consequently, the

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[76] Pike, *PAVN,* 195.

[77] Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English, trans., *Lao-Tzu: Tao Te Ching* (New York City: Random House, Inc., 1997), 30-31.

[78] Lanning and Cragg, *Inside the VC and the NVA,* 171.

Vietnamese society's Confucian and Taoist heritage and North Vietnamese Army's history combined to form an organizational culture that valued soldiers and leaders who were patient and had a strategically defensive mindset.[79]

The North Vietnamese Army valued leaders who could manage large organizations. The Vietnamese Communist Party distinguished its leadership by giving it the rank of cadre. A cadre was a leader who could lead either a political or military organization or both at the same time. North Vietnamese Army leaders described the ideal cadre as one who was zealously ideological, able to manage and mobilize organizations, disciplined, not tempted by material objects, loyal, and obedient to society. A cadre leader was a hybrid between a civil political leader and a military officer.[80]

The characteristics that North Vietnamese Army soldiers focused on classifying their leadership provided an aspect of what the North Vietnamese Army valued as an organization. North Vietnamese Army soldiers developed an informal method of classifying their cadre leaders. The soldiers referred to their best cadre as a driver, who could organize troops and transport equipment while displaying courage, fairness, and motivation. Soldiers further classified drivers as either a driver-careerist or driver-devotee. Both classifications had positive connotations. A driver-careerist had tactical and technical competence. A driver-devotee maintained a passionate devotion to communist ideologies. Another classification, a practitioner, had adept administration skills. A practitioner efficiently moved paperwork up the chain of command and moved military supplies down to subordinate units. Soldiers classified both combat leaders and political officers. The three branches of combat, politics, and logistics maintained equal values albeit their different classifications. North Vietnamese Army soldiers valued leaders who could manage large

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[79] Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam, A History: The First Complete Account of Vietnam at War* (New York City: Penguin Books Ltd., 1984), 99, 182.

[80] Lanning and Cragg, *Inside the VC and the NVA,* 91-95.

organizations that consisted of many soldiers and various types of equipment. The North

Vietnamese Army believed that efficient management of troops, equipment, and administration

optimized its fighting capacity.[81]

The North Vietnamese Army's organizational culture stemmed from a national heritage

of struggle combined with Taoist and Confucian philosophies. It perceived war as a national

endeavor that required the mobilization of the country. Its manpower came from conscripting

civilians from sixteen to forty-five years of age. From a North Vietnamese population of eighteen

million people in 1966, the North Vietnamese Army consisted of approximately 475,000

personnel of which 250,000 were in the regular army while the other 225,000 were in

paramilitary organizations.[82]

General Vo Nguyen Giap

General Vo Nguyen Giap cultivated a distinct personality and cultural identity. Giap's

identity formed the foundation upon which he perceived warfare and a basis that governed his

behavioral actions. Giap's Vietnamese upbringing in the Chinese classics and deep association

with the North Vietnamese Army shaped his worldview. Throughout the mid-1900s until his

death in 2013, Giap was the highest-ranking officer in the North Vietnamese Army. Giap led the

North Vietnamese Army throughout Vietnam's wars against France, Japan, and the United States.

He applied Sun-Tzu's concept that warfare was a political affair. Specifically in the war against

the United States, Giap not only sequenced tactical actions as a means to achieve communist

political objectives, but fused communist ideology as a motive within tactical actions.[83]

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[81] Gordon L. Rottman *North Vietnamese Army Soldier 1958-75* (New York City: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2009), 45-46; Pike, *PAVN,* 192.

[82] Lanning and Cragg, *Inside the VC and the NVA,* 39.

[83] O'Neill, *General Giap*, 10.

Personal Heritage

Analyzing Giap's father, Vo Quang Nghiem, provides an understanding of the environment that surrounded Giap's childhood in French Indochina. Nghiem played an instrumental role in shaping Giap's thought process, philosophy, and behavior. Nghiem became a scholar through the meritocracy-based recruiting system that Vietnam modeled from China. He passed the written and oral examinations that tested Confucian classics of religion, history, mathematics, and music. Throughout the late-1800s to early-1900s, Nghiem participated in Vietnam's nationalist movement against French colonialism. Nghiem expressed antipathy towards French colonialism and participated in uprisings against the French in 1885 and 1888. In 1911, during the time of Giap's birth, Nghiem worked hard as a farmer and a second-class Vietnamese scholar in the rural village of An Xa, North Vietnam. Nghiem diligently homeschooled Giap on the concept of nationalism and the Chinese classics of Taoism and Confucianism.[84]

Giap followed the Taoist philosophies and Confucian ethics of filial piety, respect for elders, and social obligations. As a teenager during the late 1920s, Giap displayed exceptional intelligence. He had a penchant for philosophy and sociopolitical affairs, particularly in nationalism and communism. He made a huge accomplishment as a minority student in the French-populated education system when he earned a baccalaureate degree in philosophy from the Lycée Albert Sarraut in Hanoi. In the 1930s under French colonialism, about eighty percent of Vietnamese were illiterate and only ten percent of children received schooling, of which only four percent went beyond primary education. The French established three Lycées in Vietnam for the children of French administrators with the exception of very few Vietnamese students, which

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[84] Macdonald, *Giap,* 18-19; Colvin, *Giap*, 24-25. French authorities arrested Nghiem in 1919 for subversive activities; he died while in prison.

included Giap. After Giap received his baccalaureate, he went on to attend Indochinese University in Hanoi, the only university in the nation.[85]

As a college student in the 1930s, Giap idealistically desired to solve the problem of social inequality in Vietnam. He believed that communism was the solution to end social injustice, which prompted him to diligently study the writings of Lenin, Marx, and Mao Tse-tung. He vociferously read Vietnamese nationalist articles by Pham Boi Chau and Ho Chi Minh, and balanced his passion for communism with his academic studies. From 1918 to 1945, only 1,134 Vietnamese graduated from Indochinese University to become doctors, engineers, and lawyers. Giap was one of the 408 Vietnamese lawyers who graduated during that twenty-five year period.[86]

In 1940, when Giap was a young adult in his late twenties, he met Ho Chi Minh in Kunming, China for the first time. It was after this meeting that Giap solidified his communist perspectives, modeling them after those of Ho Chi Minh who he idolized. Giap inculcated Ho Chi Minh's principle perspective of the military's role in society and politics during a time of war. Ho Chi Minh taught that motivation from the people, fueled with enmity, took primacy when considering political action. He outlined that political action was more important than military action, and asserted that political and military success would come as a result of motivating the masses.[87] Giap adopted Ho Chi Minh's principles of embedding political and military success as effects of a unified and motivated people. During the Vietnam War in 1961, Giap wrote pamphlets that restated the same narrative he used during French colonialism. He wrote:

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[85] O'Neill, *General Giap,* 10.

[86] Macdonald, *Giap,* 22.

[87] Ibid., 27.

War of liberation of the Vietnamese people proves that, in the face of an enemy as powerful as he is cruel, victory is possible only by uniting the whole people within the bosom of a firm and wide national united front based on the worker-peasant alliance.[88]

Giap became Ho Chi Minh's most loyal apprentice. Ho Chi Minh mentored Giap throughout the mid-1900s. The following picture depicts Giap and Ho Chi Minh in 1945.[89]

Figure 2. Vo Nguyen Giap (left) and his mentor Ho Chi Minh (right) in 1945

Source: *Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap (1911-2013),* ca. 1945, accessed January 5, 2016, http://sangam.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Young-Giap-left-with-his-mentor-Ho-Chi-Minh-in-1945.jpg.

Personal Philosophy

Giap did not make a distinction between military objectives and his communist political objectives. He held a Taoist perspective of the interconnectedness of political affairs including warfare, socioeconomics, and social justice. He focused on the moral cause of waging war, which resonated with North Vietnamese society's Taoist concept of the Mandate of Heaven. He used

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[88] Giap, *People's War, People's Army*, 14.

[89] Ibid., 14-15.

Western-based tactics to achieve a Sino-based strategy. Taoism maintained a Universalist ideology in which conflicting or contradictory theories regularly coexisted, which allowed him to freely mix and combine various tactics, strategies, and ideologies.[90]

Giap maintained Sun-Tzu's Taoist perspective of the primacy of the moral cause for waging and winning a war. Sun-Tzu stated:

> To gauge the outcome of war we must appraise the situation on the basis of the following five criteria. The first of the five criteria is the *Tao*…The *Tao* is what brings the thinking of the people in line with their superiors.[91]

Sun-Tzu described the Taoist relationship between heaven, the political ruler, his army, and his people. When the ruler's intention and motive aligned with heaven, the ruler had the moral high ground, which was first of five criteria for military victory. Ho Chi Minh mentored Giap on this Taoist principle on the morality of waging a just war, who in turn used Sun-Tzu's basis of a ruler's understanding of the Tao as a criterion for victory.[92]

Giap perceived that political power provided the source for military power. In a short war, military force eroded the basis of political support. In a protracted war, the strength came from the political will of the society. Any loss of political strength was a loss of military strength.[93] He wrote, "The enemy's strategic principle was to attack swiftly and win swiftly. The more the war was protracted the lesser would be his strong points, and their weak points would grow weaker." [94] In the wars against France and the United States, Giap prescribed a protracted war strategy.[95]

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[90] Macdonald, *Giap,* 18-19.

[91] Sun-Tzu, *Sun-Tzu,* trans. Ames, 103.

[92] Macdonald, *Giap,* 26.

[93] O'Neill, *General Giap,* 63.

[94] Giap, *People's War,* 50.

[95] Ibid., 49-50.

When Giap met with Mao Tse-tung in China in 1948, Mao's principles of a protracted war strategy formed the basis for Giap's military policy. Mao informed Giap that Vietnam's situation in 1948 had similarities to China's situation in 1936. Similar to China's situation in 1936, Vietnam existed as a colonial state and Vietnamese communist leadership commanded the support of a large section of the population. The French maintained a powerful and hostile army against Giap's relatively weak army. Mao taught Giap that in its current state, the Vietnamese could not win. Giap had to wait patiently until the enmity of his people grew to offset the enemy's military power. Giap understood that he had to wage a strategically protracted war to set conditions for success prior to initiating tactical major offensives. While engaging in a mindset of a protracted war strategy, Giap seized an opportunistic moment in the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954. He defeated the French forces, which ultimately ended French colonization.[96] Although Giap had a protracted war strategy, the overwhelming success of the single battle in Dien Bien Phu ended the need to conduct a protracted war. Against the US military in the 1960s, Giap held the same strategy of conducting a protracted war.[97]

Personal Values

Giap valued justice and perceived colonialism as a problem of injustice. He studied Lenin and Marx, which inspired him to want to replace colonial injustice by ushering in a new social system. He wrote, "The Vietnamese people's war of liberation was, a just war, aiming to win back the independence and unity of the country, to bring land to our peasants…That is why it was first

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[96] Russell Stetler, ed., *The Military Art of People's War: Selected Writings of General Vo Nguyen Giap* (New York City: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 142-145.

[97] O'Neill, *General Giap,* 61-62.

and foremost a people's war." In essence, he invoked Taoist ideologies by framing the problem on injustice.[98]

In line with Taoist and Confucian ideologies, Giap valued people of high morals, industrious ethics, honesty, humbleness, and simplicity. He was a hardworking, humble, and honest man who sought leaders with high morals and a strong work ethic. He thought that the leader epitomized high morals, a strong work ethic, and humility. In 1942, Giap venerated Ho Chi Minh by stating, "[Ho Chi Minh] set an example of industry, thrift, integrity, and compassion."[99] When Giap recruited people to become military leaders, he based his recruitment on people with high morals who did not indulge in decadent life. He stated that the future leaders had to have the same standard of living as peasants. Giap's plan was to recruit these types of people and proselytize them in communism.[100]

Giap valued patience and communicated to his peers to be patient to seek opportunities in warfare. Sun-Tzu stated "When [the enemy armies] are fulfilled, be prepared against them; when they are strong, avoid them."[101] Giap appreciated the concept of waiting for opportunities. In 1944 while raising an army against France, he wrote, "The struggle must build, however slowly. The way to win is by small defeats, one after another until the coup de grace." He bided his time for an opportune moment realizing that it was his greatest asset, especially given that he thought that the French would tire of the conflict.[102]

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[98] Giap, *People's War,* 11.

[99] O'Neill, *General Giap,* 32.

[100] Ibid.*,* 31-33.

[101] Sun-Tzu, *The Art of War* trans. Cleary, 51-52.

[102] Vo Nguyen Giap, *How We Won the War* (Philadelphia: Recon Publications, 1976), 7, 18.

During the 1960s, when Giap fought against the US military, he exercised patience by waiting until 1968 to conduct the North Vietnamese Tet Offensive.[103] The Offensive eventually led to the January 1973 Paris Peace Agreement between North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and the United States, which cemented the redeployment of all US military forces from Vietnam. Following the Agreement, the North Vietnamese communist government held a meeting from May to June 1973 to change its defensive strategy to an offensive one to unify North and South Vietnam. Giap established a patient strategy of building the capacity of the North Vietnamese Army and improving logistical routes into South Vietnam with the objective of annihilating the South Vietnamese Army. On April 26, 1975, the North Vietnamese Army successfully launched into the South Vietnamese capital of Saigon.[104]

Giap valued organizational management skills. Military historian Bernard Fall considered him to be an average military tactician, but an administrative and logistical genius. According to Fall, Giap had an uncanny ability to efficiently and rapidly move men and supplies around the battlefield. During the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, Giap constructed supply roads and masterfully concentrated his troops, artillery, and supplies. This surprised the French forces, who assumed that the Vietnamese could not attack because the lack of roads prevented Vietnamese forces from transporting artillery. He focused on building roads and tunnels to transport artillery; his refined camouflaging of artillery units and use of tunnels to move his artillery prevented

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[103] Macdonald, *Giap,* 30-31; Lien-Hang Nguyen, *Hanoi's War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 101-102. In 1967, both Giap and Ho Chi Minh initially disagreed with General Secretary of the Communist Party, Le Duan, and General Van Tien Dung on conducting the Tet Offensive of 1968. When presented with the Tet Offensive plan, Ho Chi Minh stated that the plan was unrealistic and overly optimistic. Giap added that he believed the North Vietnamese Army was not ready to launch a large-scale attack aimed at the cities and towns of South Vietnam. Giap advised on conducting a series of small attacks in a southerly direction that built up with a final blow in the cities. Instead of arguing and causing disharmony within the North Vietnamese or the Communist Party, both Giap and Ho left Vietnam. Ho went to Beijing while Giap went to Hungary and returned after the Tet Offensive.

[104] Guan, *Ending the Vietnam War*, 160-165.

French counterbattery units from effectively conducting counterbattery fires. Following the

Vietnamese artillery barrage, Giap relentlessly sent in infantry troops and supplies to surround

and besiege French Forces at Dien Bien Phu. After he besieged the French forces for two months,

they capitulated, which subsequently ended French occupation. Giap was a skilled administrator

who could organize and manage the complexities of the North Vietnam Army in waging war. His

abilities as a logistician and organizational manager enabled his decisive victory.[105]

Giap valued Western style tactics. While Chinese ideologies influenced his strategic

perspectives, his studies in Western European military art influenced his understanding of tactics.

His studies of the Napoleonic campaigns shaped his tactical competence in warfare. He had an

affinity for the French belief in the primacy of the offensive spirit and ardently studied

Napoleon's campaigns and decisive victories. As a history teacher at a private school in Hanoi

from 1938 to 1940, Giap eloquently briefed his students on Napoleon's achievements. He

demonstrated how Napoleon tactically arrayed his forces on the battlefield and committed bold

offensive actions. When he fought the French Army in the Red River Delta in 1951, Giap tried to

emulate Napoleon by conducting bold frontal attacks, which unfortunately resulted in a dismal

defeat. After an after-action review, Giap determined that he wrongly applied his tactics and did

not use the terrain to his advantage.[106]

Giap also read T. E. Lawrence's book, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom,* in which Lawrence,

a British officer, wrote an autobiographical account of the Arab Revolt from 1916 to 1918.

Lawrence liaised with the Arab rebels who fought against the Ottoman Turks in the Middle East.

From this reading, Giap extracted a practical example of how to apply minimum military force in

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[105] Bernard B. Fall, *Street Without Joy* (New York City: Schocken Books, 1964), 106, 373; Ted Morgan, *Valley of Death: The Tragedy at Dien Bien Phu that Led America into the Vietnam War* (New York City: Random House, 2010), 260-261; Stetler, ed., *The Military Art of People's War,* 182.

[106] O'Neill, *General Giap,* 86-91.

achieving maximum tactical and strategic effects. Throughout his wars against France, Japan, and

the United States, Giap referred to his readings of Lawrence because the North Vietnamese Army

constantly fought against numerically and/or technologically superior adversaries.[107]

Giap thought in terms of Sun-Tzu's statement about knowing the enemy and oneself as a

theory for victory in war. In 1966, he wrote an article for the Vietnamese society in which he

stated:

> Today the question as to who will win in South Vietnam is more pressing than ever, for
> in the present juncture there has emerged a new factor: the introduction by the American
> imperialists of some hundred thousand troops. Can these massive reinforcements reverse
> the situation? We have analyzed…the enemy and ourselves, assessed his and our strength
> and capabilities, and have drawn the conclusion that the enemy will be defeated in the
> end and that we will certainly win. This is the theoretical side of the problem."[108]

Although Giap did not specifically describe what he analyzed about himself and the United

States, he used Sun-Tzu's theory in his communications. He communicated to the North

Vietnamese Army soldiers and the Vietnamese society that North Vietnam would win because of

his analysis. After US forces redeployed in 1973, he claimed victory over them. In 1975, North

Vietnamese Army forces seized Saigon and united South Vietnam with North Vietnam.[109]

US National Culture

The author analyzed General Creighton Abrams as a case study to understand how

personal identity can layer over an organization's, and a nation's, cultural identity. Abrams

commanded US Military Assistance Command–Vietnam from 1968 to 1972. Since the US Army

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[107] T. E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph* (New York City: Anchor Books, 1991), 3; Macdonald, *Giap,* 23.

[108] *Daily Report Supplement Far East: Excerpts of General Vo Nguyen Giap Article in January 1966 Hoc Tap* (Rosslyn, VA: Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 1966), 10, accessed November 29, 2015, http://www.docfoc.com/1966-patriotic-war-general-giap.

[109] George Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* (New York City: McGraw Hill, 2002), 338.

recruits from the US citizenry, understanding US heritage provides the roots that shaped the US military's organizational culture.

National Heritage

US culture had its roots in a Christian heritage motivated by religious convictions. The first English Pilgrims settled in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620. Ten years later, John Winthrop and English Puritans established the Massachusetts Bay colony. In the 1800s, De Tocqueville wrote that Christianity established the umbrella framework through which US citizens tacitly understood their philosophy, thought process, and lifestyle. They did not discuss or argue the ontology of Christianity, but simply believed in the religion as a matter of faith. From this Christian religious heritage, Christianity merged with national habits and sentiments. Although the English Pilgrims had British ethnic ties, their resentment and eventual rebellion against England resulted in a national desire to define nationhood along non-ethnic lines.[110]

A national heritage of pursuing the "American Dream" resonates with US society. French-American writer Michel Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur wrote an autobiographical account of US society prior to the American Revolutionary War in the early-1770s. In de Crèvecoeur's book, *Letters from an American Farmer*, he famously stated, "What then is the American, this new man? He is neither an European, or the descendant of an European; hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country."[111] De Crèvecoeur described that an American did not equate to a certain ethnic race, social status, or national origin, rather, he described how a typical American had the freedom to think and act without an intrusive

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[110] De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* 707.

[111] J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer and Sketches of Eighteenth Century America* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1986), 66.

government. He stated that Americans have a unique custom reflective in all thirteen colonies, which allowed an American to work hard, secure lawful property, and enjoy life.[112]

National Philosophy

The US philosophical perspective of agency originated from ancient Greek philosophers. A sense of agency refers to one's awareness of being an independent, volitional actor acting onto an external world. From the time of Homer's *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* in the 800s BC, Homer described gods and humans as having individuated personalities acting with independent volitions. Greeks viewed themselves as unique individuals with various ambitions and goals- with the ability to control behavior and outcomes based on causality. The Greek philosophy of agency and individualism provided the roots for US philosophy.[113]

US philosophy focuses on an individualistic and pragmatic pursuit to accomplish or achieve defined goals. In 1840, French political philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville described how US citizens generally perceive the world. In de Tocqueville's book, *Democracy in America,* he described US philosophy:

> To escape from the spirit of system, from the yoke of habits, from the maxims of family, from the opinions of class, and, to a certain point, from the prejudices of nation; to take tradition only as information, and present facts only as a useful study for doing otherwise and better; to seek by yourself and in yourself alone the reason for things, to strive toward the result without allowing yourself to be caught up in the means, and to aim for substance beyond form: such are the principal features that characterize what I will call the philosophical method of the Americans.[114]

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[112] De Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer,* 67.

[113] Marc Jeannerod, "The Mechanism of Self-Recognition in Humans," *Behavioural Brain Research* 142 (2003): 1, accessed January 16, 2016, http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.294.8126&rep=rep1&type=pdf; Kostas Myrsiades, ed., *Approaches to Homer's Iliad and Odyssey* (New York City: Peter Lang Publishing, 2010), 60; Nisbett, *The Geography of Thought,* 3.

[114] De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* 698.

De Tocqueville described a US philosophy of pragmatism and achieving results, which stemmed from independence from the British aristocracy. He described that democracy in the United States led to the establishment of a unique government that empowered public affairs.[115]

US society combined Greek philosophical perspectives on agency with scientific methods in ontology and epistemology to develop a US philosophy. US citizens desired to witness truths for themselves and rely on their own reasoning. De Tocqueville observed that US citizens have a custom of taking personal observations of an event or phenomenon to intuitively guide their judgment and behavior. He concluded that they generally believe that human intelligence has the capacity to understand anything. People can explicitly understand every phenomenon in the world if one applies enough research, analysis, and thought into the causal logic of a particular phenomenon.[116]

The US founding fathers' decision not to establish a national religion, enabled US society's implementation of a US philosophy in changing old traditions and laws without disturbing religious beliefs.[117] The First Amendment allowed the US Christian majority, to

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[115] De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* 698-699.

[116] Ibid.*,* 699-700.

[117] US Constitution, amend. 1. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Bill Fortenberry, "What Freedom of Religion?" *The Federalist Papers Project,* accessed February 20, 2016, http://www.thefederalist papers.org/current-events/what-freedom-of-religion. The original meaning of a government not establishing a national religion dealt with financial support, not religious toleration. The establishment of religion regarded a government that protected and financially supported the Christian religion. In 1832, James Madison wrote a letter to Reverend Jasper Adams regarding the non-establishment of religion. Madison wrote, "The simple question to be decided is whether a support of the best and purest religion, the Christian religion itself ought not so far at least as pecuniary means are involved, to be provided for by the Government rather than be left to the voluntary provisions of those who profess it." Madison concluded, "the existing character, distinguished as it is by its religious features, and the lapse of time now more than 50 years since the legal support of Religion was withdrawn sufficiently prove that it does not need the support of Government, and it will scarcely be contended that Government has suffered by the exemption of Religion from its cognizance, or its pecuniary aid." The concept of a secular government that tolerates religion was a modern concept that evolved from Madison's original concept that the US government would not financially support the Christian religion.

exercise their religion as US citizens with minimal tension between themselves and the public administrative sector. Many US Christians referred back to their Bible to support that Jesus Christ did not reject a form of governance that separated faith from governance. When Jewish Pharisees challenged Jesus over whether Jews should submit and pay taxes to Caesar's secular government, Jesus showed them Caesar's imprinted image on a coin. Jesus replied, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."[118] From this passage, US Christians understood that faith and governance had separate roles. In the book of Romans, the Apostle Paul reaffirmed Jesus' perspective when he wrote, "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities."[119] US Christians understood that secular governance did not conflict with their practice of religion. They therefore maintained a firm presence within society and public administration.

National Values

Major aspects of US culture are its inclinations towards individuality and the freedom to live and choose how to live. De Tocqueville described how US society valued individualism. It is an ideology that emphasizes independent and self-reliant values over the values of a collective group. US citizens generally believe that they have free will to control their lives.[120] The following contemporary example provides a foreigner's perspective of US culture. Pakistani immigrant Syed Zafar, commented on the vast differences between American individualism and the family orientation of other cultures. Zafar immediately identified that US citizens like to have a lot of personal choices on a daily basis to display one's individualism and uniqueness. Zafar stated that the concept of having a favorite color was not something that a Pakistani person had. Ordering food in the United States was an ordeal. Servers consistently asked him, "How do you

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[118] Mark 12:17 (New International Version).

[119] Romans 13:1 (New International Version).

[120] De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* 882-884.

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like your steak? How do you like your eggs? What kind of bread do you like? What kind of tea

bag do you like?" He humorously lamented, "The killer is the salad dressing. There are so many

choices." Zafar described a distinct US culture in which customers are accustomed to having

many choices.[121]

US national values focus on individualism and self-reliance—that one should think and

act as an individual. An example that occurred in the twenty-first century involves a Pakistani

student who immigrated to the United States. He had become frustrated with his academic

advisor. He told his college advisor that he wanted to study medicine because that was his

parents' desire. The advisor told him that he should not listen to his parents, but study what he

wanted to study. The advisor told him that if studying medicine was what he wanted to do, then

he should do it, but not because it was his parents' wishes. The student grew up in a different

environment where he considered his family as an extension of himself. His parents had a vested

interest in their children's education and careers. When his parents were no longer able to work,

they would rely on him for their livelihood. Unlike many foreign citizens, US parents do not

expect to be dependent on their children upon retirement. US citizens cultivate individualism and

self-reliance from childhood and maintain this culture throughout their lives. Although Zafar's

situation occurred in the twenty-first century, the concept of US cultural virtues of individualism

existed throughout history. Zafar's perspective provides a glimpse into the individualistic and

independent roots of US culture, which gave birth to a distinct, US military culture.[122]

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[121] Syed Zafar and Joyce Zafar, "Swimming in a Sea of Choices: American Cultural Perspectives," *Your Guide to Life in the US: Living American.com*, accessed December 20, 2015, http://www.vidaamericana.com/english/swimcolumn.html, 1.

[122] Ibid., 2.

US Army Culture

The definition of US military culture is essentially how military service members commonly behave and act. Military culture includes values, customs, traditions, and their philosophical underpinnings, which create a shared institutional ethos. It provides a framework for behavioral standards, discipline, teamwork, loyalty, duty, and customs.[123] Military research analyst, Carl Builder, described how the US Army, while composed of many individuals, has a distinct personality that governs behavior and perspective on warfare. He described various faces of the US Army's personalities.[124]

Organizational Heritage

On June 14, 1775, the Second Continental Congress established the American Continental Army to fight against British aggression and to preserve freedom. Congress initially hesitated to create a standing army due to fear that it would eventually take over the government. Meanwhile, local colonial militia units only defended within their respective colonies. Congress realized the need for a national army that could move across colonial boundaries.[125]

Congress established a standing national army under firm legislative control to fight beyond colonial boundaries. After General George Washington achieved a decisive victory against British General Charles Cornwallis in the Battle of Yorktown in 1781, the United States and England eventually signed the Peace of Paris Agreement in 1783 to end the war. From the

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[123] Walter F. Ulmer, Jr., *American Military Culture in the Twenty-First Century: A Report of the CSIS International Security Program* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies Press, 2000), xviii.

[124] Builder, *The Masks of War,* 3.

[125] Millet, Maslowski, and Feis, *For the Common Defense*, 50-51.

efforts of the Continental Army, the United States achieved independence, right of navigation on the Mississippi, and access to the Northeast territories known as the Newfoundland fisheries.[126]

During the American Civil War, the US Army fought to preserve the union of the United States and to end slavery. President Abraham Lincoln's initial policy objective consisted of reuniting the Union and subsequently, ending slavery. Confederate President Jefferson Davis sought to defend the Confederate States. After Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation ending the legality of slavery in 1863, Lincoln reframed the purpose of the war on moral grounds. After Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union General Ulysses S. Grant at the village of Appomattox Court House in 1865, the fighting ended. During the Reconstruction era from 1865 to 1877, the US Army led the effort to abolish slavery and normalize relations with the former Confederate States.[127]

The US Army fought in both World Wars to fight against aggression and to secure national interests. During World War I, the United States called upon the US Army to fight and ensure Allied victory to secure US national interests in the Western hemisphere. During World War II, after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, the United States called upon the US Army along with the rest of the military to defend the US homeland and to ensure Allied victory in Europe and the Pacific. The US Army faithfully served its government and society in both World Wars.[128] It holds its heritage of upholding morality and service to the nation and society in highest regards.

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[126] Millet, Maslowski, and Feis, *For the Common Defense*, 50-51, 75.

[127] Gregory P. Downs, *After Appomattox* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 1-2.

[128] Millet, Maslowski, and Feis, *For the Common Defense*, 309, 404.

Organizational Philosophy

The US Army perceives itself as a loyal apolitical servant that exists to defend the US Constitution and serve society by subordinating itself to civil government authority. It sees its ranks coming directly from the citizenry. When the authors of *Army Doctrine Publication 1, The Army* described what the US Army represents, they stated, "Soldiers represent patriotism and selfless service, men and women in whom the Nation takes collective pride…To American citizens, Soldiers are their sons, daughters, relatives, neighbors, and during disaster, their lifeline."[129] The US Army sees itself as a loyal servant and bastion of the nation, its institutions, and its people.[130]

Although all service components can equally state that they come from US society and serve its people, the US Army's unique claim is the primacy of its belief and expression. In 1982, the authors of *Field Manual 100-1, The Army,* described that, "the Army ethic must strive to set the institution of the Army and its purpose in proper context—that of service to the larger institution of the nation, and fully responsive to the needs of its people."[131] From the US Army's perspective, the US Army, among all other services, is the most loyal servant to the nation and has the closest connection to its people. The first face of personality concerned altars of worship. The second face regarded how each service component measures itself against a standard institutional health.[132]

Additionally, the US Military Academy motto of "Duty, Honor, Country," exemplifies an aspect of the US Army's organizational culture. The US Army perceives itself as the nation's most loyal servant. As a loyal servant, it serves because of the duty to defend the Constitution,

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[129] ADP 1, *The Army,* vi.

[130] Builder, *The Masks of War*, 18-20.

[131] FM 100-1*, The Army*, 24.

[132] Builder, *The Masks of War,* 20.

society, and national interests. During a time of war, it perceives that one of its duties is to indoctrinate the citizenry into the army. At the strategic level, it relies on the government to provide the organization with soldiers based on its mission set. Operationally, it utterly relies on its sister services for capabilities such as air transport. As an obedient servant during peacetime, it prepares to deliver whatever the government and its people will demand in war.[133]

The US Army philosophy of servitude fosters a desire for amicable relations with its government, interagency organizations, sister services, and intra-service branches to best prepare for war. The US Army willfully subordinates itself under civilian authority to maintain positive working relationships with the government and society. From the time of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War, the US Army has subordinated itself to the needs of Congress. Through increased joint operations, the US Army is able to grow in both its scope of missions, equipment resources, and manpower. It praises the importance and interdependence of all its intra-service branches to be effective in combat. Its dominant concept of the next major war is a conventional one because all branches will have the opportunity to contribute and grow. A conventional war against a state would be the largest land war in which the US government would potentially participate; it provides a clear rationale for a larger army than an unconventional war against a sub-state actor. [134]

From a tactical perspective, soldiers take great pride in soldiering skills rather than focusing on equipment. In the early 1960s, the US Army emphasized soldiers' marksmanship skills and clung to its M-14 rifles while the US Air Force quickly embraced the technologically advanced M-16 rifles. Only in the late 1960s through 1970s did the US Army finally change its weapon of choice to the M-16.[135] When artillerymen speak about their profession, they may

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[133] Builder, *The Masks of War,* 33-34.

[134] ADRP 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, 1-3; Builder, *The Masks of War*, 138-141.

[135] Gordon Rottman, *The M-16* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, Ltd., 2011), 17.

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describe their skills of laying a battery of guns and their precision of fires. The kind of gun, whether it is a 155mm or 105mm Howitzer, is often an incidental factor. Similarly, armored soldiers may describe their efficiency of crew skills before they describe the kind of tank they operate. Intra-service distinctions within the US Army are the fourth face that depicts the US Army's personality.[136]

From Builder's various descriptions of the US Army, he assessed its identity to be the artisans of warfare. With its interdependent branches of the combat arms, the US Army sees itself as the wielders of martial skills, not equipment or positions. Like an artisan, it takes great pride in its skills. The combat arms are like guilds, associations of artisans who come together to pursue a common interest, which in their case is the conduct of combat on behalf of the nation.[137]

Organizational Values

The US Army values service to the nation and the mastery of tactics through combined arms warfare. As an obedient servant to the US Government and society, the US Army values its ability to provide a menu of options to the US President. Combatant commanders and their staffs provide multiple options to the US President, Secretary of Defense, or Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning,* states,

> The planning staff conducts detailed planning to fully develop options, identify resources, and identify and mitigate risk. Planners develop the concept of operations, deployment plans, and supporting plans that contain multiple options in order to provide the flexibility to adapt to changing conditions.[138]

From a tactical perspective, the US Army values the ability to choose from multiple courses of action. From the battalion level to the corps level, a staff doctrinally provides multiple courses of

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[136] Builder, *The Masks of War,* 24.

[137] Ibid., 27-31.

[138] Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), x.

action for the commander. By doing so, staffs fulfill their roles to serve their unit, the US Army, and the nation.[139]

In warfare, the US Army values the mastery of tactics through combined arms warfare, which includes intra-service branches and inter-service branches such as the US Navy, US Air Force, US Marine Corps, and US Coast Guard. In the US Army, there are three, intra-service divisions—the combat arms, combat support, and combat service support. Infantry, armor, and artillery are the main branches of the combat arms. The US Army acknowledges the importance of incorporating all branches to maximize effects on a battlefield. The combat support and combat service support branches provide supporting roles to the combat arms.[140]

The US Army's intra-service branches acknowledge their interdependency. For example, the infantryman may depend on the artilleryman for indirect fires while tank crewmen may depend on infantrymen to identify vulnerabilities in their flanks. Similarly, all the combat arms branches depend on the combat support and service support branches with issues such as logistics, communication, and intelligence information. The US Army's concept of combining its combat arms branches, known as "combined arms," is a longstanding one and acknowledged as an effective method in warfare since the end of the First World War.[141]

A conventional war calls for a mix of all intra-service and inter-service branches, through which US artisans of warfare prefer to execute their craft. The US Army's armor branch tends to dominate resources and attention in conventional, desert warfare in the Middle East. Operation Desert Storm in 1991 showcased the armor branch's dominance in desert warfare. On the other hand, US Special Forces tend to dominate unconventional wars and minimizes the roles of the

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[139] Field Manual (FM) 6-0, *Commander and Staff Organization and Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), 9-7.

[140] Builder, *The Masks of War,* 24-25.

[141] Ibid., 27-32; Peter J. Schifferle, *America's School for War: Fort Leavenworth, Officer Education, and Victory in World War II* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 36.

major combat arms. In contrast, the US Army's infantry branch dominates resources and attention in jungle and mountain warfare. A conventional war in Eastern Europe would call for a healthy mix of infantry, armor, artillery, aviation, Special Forces, and close air support provided by the US Air Force. Combat support branches would also play a vital role.[142]

The best example of the rise of US Army power occurred in its march across Central Europe, from Normandy to the heart of Germany, in the latter part of World War II. From June 1944 to May 1945 in the European theater, the US Army displayed the pinnacle of combined arms maneuver warfare by seizing and holding the initiative against a formidable enemy. The breakout at Saint Lo, the Battle of the Bulge, and the Rhine crossings showed ingenuity, courage, and above all—power. With roughly eight million soldiers comprising eighty-six Divisions in Europe during World War II, the US Army became a war machine. It holds this image as its best memories of itself.[143]

As artisans of war, the US Army values its intimate relationship with US society, its obedience and loyalty to the US Government, and its ability to practice the art of combined arms warfare. The framework of the US Constitution framed the US Army's philosophical outlook to readily subordinate itself to the US Government in serving and defending US society. The US Army values training and discipline in mastering the art of warfare. The US Military Academy's motto of "Duty, Honor, Country," exemplifies its organizational culture. When Creighton Abrams became a cadet at the US Military Academy in 1932, his socialization and indoctrination into the army further shaped his identity, perceptions, and actions as a US Army leader.[144]

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[142] Builder, *The Masks of War,* 142.

[143] "WWII by the Numbers, Charting and Graphing D-Day and WWII Data," National World War II Museum, accessed December 20, 2015, http://www.nationalww2museum.org/ learn/education/for-teachers/lesson-plans/pdfs/by-the-numbers.pdf; Builder, *The Masks of War,* 132.

[144] Sorley, *Thunderbolt,* 213.

General Creighton Abrams

General Creighton Abrams had a distinct personality and cultural identity that reflected US society and the US Army. Abrams's personal identity formed the foundation upon which he perceived warfare and the basis that governed his behavioral actions. From understanding Abrams's personal identity, one can assess a correlative relationship between identity and behavior for the purpose of anticipating possible future events. Understanding his formative years provides a foundation upon which he built and established his personal identity.[145]

Personal Heritage

Abrams's childhood exemplified scholarly achievement, leadership, and physical prowess. He was born on September 15, 1914 in a semi-rural community near Springfield, Massachusetts. He grew up on a farm where he balanced his farming duties and household chores. At his high school, he was the class president, school newsletter editor, president of an academic honor society club, and captain of the football team. During the interwar period between World War I and World War II, Abrams attended the US Military Academy at West Point, graduating in the Class of 1936. Upon graduation, he became a cavalry officer in the 7th Cavalry Regiment at Fort Bliss, Texas.[146]

As a young horse cavalry officer transitioning to armored warfare, Abrams subscribed to General Adna Chaffee's philosophy of combined arms armored warfare. Abrams thought that armored tank battle required a balanced team of arms and services in which every branch had equal contributions. Chaffee stated, "Armor is more than a branch. It is a state of mind whereby a balanced team of arms and services works together, in a climate of equal importance and equal

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[145] Sorley, *Thunderbolt,* 14-15.

[146] Ibid., 24.

prestige." Abrams quoted Chaffee often throughout his career, on tactics, inter-service and intra-service relationships, and leadership.[147]

As an armored battalion commander during World War II, Abrams worked hard, learned from mistakes, and adapted to accomplish his assigned missions. In preparation for deployment, he organized daily meetings with his troop commanders to go over tactical mistakes and how to improve them. Along with other armor officers at the time, Abrams adapted from the 1939 Field Manual 100-5, which stated, "As a rule, tanks are employed to assist the advance of infantry."[148] Abrams thought that massed armored forces could provide the majority of mobility and firepower as the supported effort in a tactical engagement. Abrams quoted Chaffee's statement on adaptation:

> It may be true in the abstract that the principles of war do not change…but methods do change and are constantly changing. We may study the great captains of the past to learn of their principles, but do not let us be tied too much to their methods. For methods change with every change of armament and equipment.[149]

Abrams adapted his tactics from his observations and was not tied to dogmatic methods.[150]

Personal Philosophy

Samuel Huntington's theoretical framework of civilian control of the military reflected Abrams' perspective of civil-military relations in the conduct of warfare. In 1962, Abrams was the Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations for Civil Affairs. He coordinated military forces for President John F. Kennedy during a civil rights event at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, Mississippi. The Mississippi governor opposed the college admittance of James

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[147] Sorley, *Thunderbolt,* 36.

[148] Field Manual (FM) 100-5, *Field Service Regulations: Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1939), 9.

[149] Sorley, *Thunderbolt*, 36.

[150] Ibid., 35-36.

Meredith, an African-American student. President Kennedy was willing to use federal forces as a last resort to ensure Meredith could safely attend college. Reporters later asked Abrams about his perspective of civilian-military relations. He stated,

> I am one of those who believes that an Army officer must…do what he is told, even if he has another solution for the problem…You have to work with all kinds of people. But they don't enter into the scheme of things. They can't stop you from doing your job.[151]

As a US Army officer, Abrams understood the clear military roles and civilian roles in both peacetime and wartime.[152]

The constitutional framework of US civilian control of the military shapes how US Army leaders perceive their distinct military role in warfare. Army leaders perceive that the Army conducts military actions in support of policy objectives set by civilians. Article II of the Constitution provides the framework within which the military subordinates itself to the President. The Constitution empowers the President to set policy objectives and establishes the President as the Commander in Chief of the US military. In 1957, author Samuel Huntington described a theoretical framework of civil-military relations. He described it as, "the proper subordination of a competent, professional military to the ends of policy as determined by civilian authority."[153] The US framework of an apolitical military organization conducting military operations to achieve policy objectives influences how a US Army leader thinks and acts in warfare.

As the commander of US Military Assistance Command–Vietnam, Abrams established clear military objectives in line with his understanding of President Lyndon Johnson's guidance. Abrams defined the war as one war, not a conventional and pacification war. He reframed his

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[151] Sorley, *Thunderbolt*, 164.

[152] Ibid., 164-165.

[153] Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 70-73.

problem, which included the damaging effects US actions had on South Vietnamese peasants. Abrams stated, "The enemy is not the only threat…My problem is colored blue."[154] Abrams understood that indiscriminate US action caused unnecessary civilian casualties, which exacerbated tension between the South Vietnamese population and the US military. Throughout his approach, he constrained his actions within military roles. He never questioned President Johnson's policies nor sought to influence political decisions.[155] The following image depicts Abrams in 1968 as the commander of US Military Assistance Command–Vietnam.

Figure 3. Creighton Abrams as commander of US Military Assistance Command–Vietnam in 1968

Source: Thomas W. Scoville, *Reorganizing for Pacification Support* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1982), 65.

In 1968, newly elected US President Richard Nixon announced the policy of "Vietnamization," which encompassed military and interagency efforts in Vietnam. Ending the Vietnam War required not only a military solution, but a sociopolitical and socioeconomic solution that hinged on the capabilities of the South Vietnamese Government and the South

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[154] Sorley, *Thunderbolt,* 235.

[155] Ibid.*,* 234-236.

Vietnamese military. Nixon's policy objective was to strengthen the South Vietnamese armed forces and bolster the South Vietnamese Government to be capable of defending against North Vietnam without the United States. Nixon stated to the US public that he would "end the war and win the peace" in Vietnam.[156] The interagency aspect of Vietnamization, known as "Pacification," involved US governmental agencies transitioning government control over to the South Vietnamese Government. The military aspect involved US military forces training, equipping, and improving South Vietnamese forces' capabilities. Abrams's strategic military objective was to establish a capable South Vietnamese military to defend against the North Vietnamese Army, which would enable the redeployment of US forces.[157]

Nixon and US Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird outlined three focus areas within the US military strategy for Abrams to execute. The first focus area consisted of US forces gradually turning over the responsibility of fighting to the South Vietnamese military. The second focus area consisted of developing the South Vietnamese military's capabilities in artillery, air, and naval assets to achieve self-reliance. The third focus area was the reduction of the US military presence to that of a military advisory role with a small US security force for protection. Abrams did not have the authority to control US or South Vietnamese civil-political organizations. He understood that he had to coordinate the military aspect of Nixon's Vietnamization policy with Pacification efforts in order to ultimately achieve the President's policy objectives.[158]

Abrams coordinated military objectives with interagency objectives to achieve a unity of effort in perceiving and fighting the war as "one war." Abrams's intent consisted of three major points, which regarded friendly force actions, the enemy, and the South Vietnamese civilian

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[156] James H. Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam: How America Left and South Vietnam Lost its War* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 1.

[157] Ibid., 1-2.

[158] Ibid., 21-22.

population. He intended to conduct a whole-of-government approach of combining military and interagency efforts. He established good working relations with Ambassador William E. Colby who was in charge of Pacification. Through his relationship and coordination with Colby, Abrams unified military and interagency efforts. He also requested and received the most competent US military advisors to develop the South Vietnamese military. He sought the destruction or neutralization of the North Vietnamese political, administrative, and paramilitary infrastructures that drove the motivation of the North Vietnamese and guerrillas. He also intended to secure South Vietnam's villages and hamlets. Population security included the protection of the people from the North Vietnamese Army, local paramilitary forces, guerrillas, and the enemy's covert shadow government. He firmly understood his military role as the commander of US Military Assistance Command–Vietnam. He clearly communicated his intent and effectively pursued his military objectives with the means that Nixon provided under his Vietnamization policy.[159]

Personal Values

Abrams valued his Christian faith throughout his life. In the 1970s, when Abrams was the commander of US Military Assistance Command–Vietnam, he spent a lot of his time with his Chaplain, Father John Benson. Abrams considered Father Benson to be his spiritual mentor. Father Benson commented on Abrams's faith:

> [Abrams] was a man of strong faith. I think that influenced an awful lot of what he did…I think always, his whole life, he was a man of strong faith. I think he had a good realism about what life was about and was in command of tremendous values that were a guide for all his actions.[160]

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[159] Sorley, *A Better War*, 23, 59.

[160] Sorley, *Thunderbolt,* 296.

Abrams regularly sought religious counsel throughout the time he commanded in Vietnam.[161]

Although Abrams never let his personal faith conflict with military regulations regarding the proselytization of it, he did not deny its influence in his decision-making. In the 1970s, during a prayer breakfast, Abrams spoke on the importance of having a faith. He stated:

> Religion is a very personal matter, but each of us, by our prayers and by our faith in God, is seeking not only an inner peace, but also the courage to face what lies ahead and to do what must be done.[162]

From his Christian faith, he cultivated integrity and courage throughout his career.[163]

Abrams valued and prioritized integrity as part of his leadership philosophy. Upon taking command of US Military Assistance Command–Vietnam in 1968, he stated, "Effective now, the overall public affairs policy of this command will be to let results speak for themselves. We will not deal in propaganda exercises in any way, but will play all of our activities at low key."[164] He believed that the US Army should be upfront in presenting facts to the media and the US public. During his previous experience as the deputy commander of US Military Assistance Command–Vietnam, he witnessed a breakdown of trust between the US Army and the US media and public. As the commander, he established a public affairs policy of presenting facts.[165]

Abrams's actions throughout his career exemplified salient aspects of US culture and the organizational culture of the US Army. As a warfighter, he integrated all inter-service and intra-service branches to achieve his military objectives. Although he understood that the Vietnam War consisted of more than military objectives, he obeyed civil authorities by constraining his role within his military authorities. He masterfully coordinated with civil interagency organizations to

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[161] Sorley, *Thunderbolt*, 296-297.

[162] Ibid., 298.

[163] Ibid., 296-297.

[164] Hammond, *Public Affairs*, 40.

[165] Ibid., 24-31.

achieve unity of effort. The 1973 Paris Accords enabled the release of all US prisoners of war and subsequently paved the road for all US forces to leave Vietnam.[166]

In 1975, the South Vietnamese military failed to defend against the North Vietnamese offensive into South Vietnam, which led to the unification of North and South Vietnam under the Hanoi government. Despite South Vietnam's defeat in 1975, Abrams accomplished his military objectives in 1973 with the military means Nixon provided under his Vietnamization policy.[167]

Conclusion

On knowing oneself and one's enemy, Sun-Tzu did not simply refer to understanding one's military capabilities and the enemy's capabilities. Many US Army leaders may intuitively think they know themselves—the US culture, the US Army culture, and their own biases. Assessing what constitutes US culture versus what is a human phenomenon, requires deliberate introspection. Sun-Tzu's maxim is not necessarily a step-by-step process, but a concomitant process of comparing and contrasting the enemy with oneself. Sun-Tzu stated that knowing oneself and knowing one's enemy equated to victory because deep understanding of the cultural background of oneself and the enemy exposes motives, intents, and likely behaviors linked to identity.[168]

Many US Army leaders maintain a false paradigm of mirror imaging, which assumes that everyone in the world has the same cognitive processes. This leads many US Army leaders to think that US Army forces can enter into a foreign country and "educate" US forms of causal logic onto a population that does not share the same Greek philosophical roots as the United

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[166] George Moss, *Vietnam: An American Ordeal* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2010), 334; Sorley, *A Better War,* 387.

[167] Sorley, *A Better War,* 334, 387.

[168] Sun-Tzu, *The Art of War,* trans. Cleary, 85.

States.[169] Different cultural upbringing produces different cognitive processes. Internalizing this phenomenon enables US Army leaders to think holistically about the operational environment.

Along with different worldviews about the nature of the world, social relations, and characteristic thought processes, North Vietnamese and US worldviews about war profoundly differed. Giap maintained a holistic concept of warfare in Vietnam. He had the authority to blend powers across diplomatic, informational, economic, and military actions. Giap took Sun-Tzu's perspective of conducting politico-military action as a single political endeavor. Sun-Tzu taught that war and political affairs equated to identical means. Giap did not separate military action from political affairs and national policy. He perceived his army as armed politicians conducting political affairs. Culture's relevance in military operations lies in how cultural perspectives affect operational art.[170]

In contrast, Abrams waged warfare through strict military lines of operations and efforts. He leveraged relationships with interagency organizations to coordinate diplomatic efforts. He took Clausewitz's perspective of conducting military action towards achieving strategic objectives as espoused by Clausewitz when he wrote that, "War is simply a continuation of political intercourse by other means."[171] From the distinction of war as another means of political affairs, Abrams perceived his military forces as a separate, but continual means of political affairs.

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[169] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, 1690* (Kitchener, Ontario: Batoche Books, 2001), 25, 33, 117, 161, 334. US philosophical roots in Greek philosophy provided a faulty paradigm in which many US citizens thought that all humans think in similar processes. The US adopted this paradigm from British empiricist philosopher, John Locke, who faultily assumed that all humans perceived and reasoned in similar cognitive processes. Throughout John Locke's, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* Locke presupposed a universal human cognitive process to refute innate knowledge.

[170] Sun-Tzu, *The Art of War,* trans. Cleary, 85.

[171] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War,* ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 605.

Whether the next major war is a conventional or unconventional war, all US Army leaders should understand how to become culturally astute. A method in understanding one's own culture can be the concomitant study of a foreign culture. Doing so may provide a mechanism to compare and contrast cultures for better understanding of them and their respective biases.

Understanding the relevant cultural aspects in a society in military operations requires practice. Similar to becoming a designer or theorist, a person cannot learn what aspects of culture are relevant in a classroom setting. Organizational learning theorist Donald Schön wrote how one becomes a designer through a series of reflection on, and in, action. In design, Schön described how "skillful designing is a kind of knowing-in-action."[172] Upon knowing-in-action, a designer must practice and conduct reflection-in-action. Within culture, a military leader may have tacit knowledge of one's culture while understanding the enemy's culture requires research and the experience of engaging with the enemy or being in the enemy's operational environment. Knowing the operational relevance of a society's cultural behaviors is similar to how Greek philosopher Plato described the paradox in seeking virtue without knowing what virtue is. In Plato's dialogue of *Meno,* the student, Meno, asked Plato:

> But how will you look for something when you don't in the least know what it is? How on earth are you going to set up something you don't know as the object of your search…even if you come right up against it, how will you know that what you have found is the thing you didn't know?[173]

Like Meno, a military leader may know that culture relates to warfare, but does not know what is relevant. Even if a relevant cultural phenomenon presents itself to a military leader, that leader

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[172] Donald A. Schön, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987), 22-26.

[173] Plato, *Protagoras and Meno,* trans. W. K. C. Guthrie (New York City: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1956), 128.

may not know its relevance in warfare. The logical paradox of Meno describes the experience of understanding operational relevance in a milieu of cultural behaviors in a society.[174]

Fortunately, US Army leaders already have the experience of being part of US society and the US Army. Through studies and analysis of heritage, philosophy, and values, at the national, organizational, and individual level, a US Army leader can come to know oneself, which will achieve one of Sun-Tzu's two requirements of knowing. Analyzing the enemy's heritage, philosophy, and values provides a foundation to becoming culturally astute about the enemy. From this foundation of knowledge, deploying and immersing into the enemy's operational environment provides deeper insight into the dynamic nature of cultural influences within a society, organization, and individual. Understanding this process will achieve a better execution of operational art, efficient accomplishment of missions, and save more US soldiers' lives in the next war.

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[174] Schön, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner,* 22-26, 82-83. Tacit knowledge is knowing something without knowing one knows or how one came to know. Knowing-in-action refers to an intelligible and public action that displays knowledge through the action itself. For example, a person smoothly driving a car through a city displays the knowledge and skills of operating a car. Reflection-on-action refers to thinking about a past action that does not have anything to do with a current action. Reflection-in-action refers to thinking about something that is occurring in order to reshape subsequent actions.

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